SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 523. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 7TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

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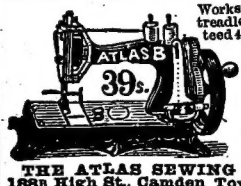

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SHORT STORIES

Edited By C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 523. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 7th, 1899.

In the Lift.

CAMPERTON stopped at the hotel desk long enough to read the letter which was handed to him; then he started for his rooms to dress for the club dinner.

But the club dinner was no longer in his mind. The contents of that letter engrossed his thoughts to the exclusion of everything else.

It was from his friend Birch, whom he had left in Cairo a month ago, and who now wrote that the Kingsley's were leaving that city for London, but would stay in Paris for a fortnight.

"So the coast is clear, old man, and you can come back," declared the writer persuasively. "You were an idiot ever to run away as you did. Join me here in a fortnight, and we'll still be in time for that little jaunt."

Camperton's jaws were set and his brows contracted as he stepped into the lift.

He knew that the Kingsleys, in returning at this time, were curtailing their original programme. And it was easy to guess the reason. They were coming home to prepare for their daughter's marriage to her titled suitor.

"And I must get away before they arrive," decided the young man. "I'll go back to Cairo without delay."

Through the midst of his mental abstraction he observed besides himself a woman—who had seated herself in a shadowy corner of the lift—but her presence did not change the current of his thoughts.

He saw only her hat as he dropped his vacant eyes upon her from his six feet of altitude, and he remained in the other corner, while the brass-buttoned boy slammed the door and pushed the lever, which sent the car soaring to regions above.

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The lift came to a sudden stop—so sudden, indeed, that Camperton not being prepared, involuntarily rose to his tiptoes, waving his arms like a huge bird about to take flight, and then pirouetted gracefully towards the other passenger in the opposite corner.

Before he could recover himself the lift shot downwards a few feet, and again stopped with an abruptness that bent his spinal column backwards like a steel spring and caused him to drop upon his knees in front of the lady.

Worse than that he had thrown out his hands in a frantic search for support, and in coming to the floor he unwittingly seized the fair stranger by each of her arms, almost crushing them in his grasp.

There was a moment of confusion, in which he had an indistinct vision of a white scared face under a large hat, and heard a half-suppressed shriek as the woman tried to draw away from him. The shriek brought him to his senses. He got upon his feet, stammering his apologies.

"There is no danger, madam," he began in his most reassuring tones. "We're fast between two floors, and must wait——"

He stopped short as he noted, with surprise and alarm, the attitude of the lady. She was still sitting in her corner, and was holding a handkerchief over her face, while little convulsive quivers and shrugs of the shoulders indicated that she was weeping.

In his contrition and his desire to soothe her harrowed feelings, he was about to sit down beside her, when a sound that was strangely like a giggle came from behind the handkerchief.

Camperton started up, flushing hotly.

"Do forgive me!" and the laughing voice suddenly became coaxing. "I know it is rude of me to laugh, but oh, Mr. Camperton, you can't imagine how funny you looked just now when you went hopping and waltzing about and kneeling at my feet—for all the world like a performing bear!"

Camperton did not hear. He was staring at her in blank amazement. He made several attempts to speak before the words would come.

"Miss Kingsley," he managed to articulate at last. His heart had almost stopped at the moment of recognition, but it was now beating furiously. "I suppose this is your astral body. It cannot be your real self."

"Oh, but it is!" said the girl with animation. "We left sooner than we had arranged to leave, and came direct to London. We arrived this morning. We are stopping at this hotel until our house is put in order."

"We?"

"Of course; papa and I. You don't suppose I would come alone?"

"I—I didn't know. I was not exactly expecting you to come at all. Your plans, as I understand them, would have kept you abroad for some time longer."

Miss Kingsley dropped her eyes.

"It is always easy to change one's plans, you know," she said, betraying a slight confusion.

"You did not honour me with an explanation of why you left," she said.

"But the note!" he exclaimed.

"The note, Mr. Camperton?"

"And my letter? Do you mean that you did not read my letter through—the one I sent to you two days before my departure?"

"I received no letter from you."

"But, Miss Kingsley, you—you answered it.

"You told me not to mention the subject again, and you are annoyed because I have insisted on reminding you of that letter. But I only want to explain why I wrote it. All Cairo was connecting your name with that of the Earl, and there were persistent rumours that you were to become his wife. It was common talk that your father had set his heart on the match, and nobody seemed to question your willingness to become a countess.

"The rumours and the gossip had a most depressing effect upon me. I think you know, Miss Kingsley, what my own hopes were. I had loved you for a year, although I had made no confession. I could not believe that you cared for the Earl, or that you would sacrifice yourself for a title, even to please your father. But the anxiety and suspense became so intolerable that I resolved to end the uncertainty and learn my own fate. Owing to your father's espionage I was unable to find an opportunity to speak with you alone. So I wrote that letter, confessing my love, begging the right to put an end to the rumours concerning you and his lordship, telling you how anxiously I should wait for an answer."

"I never received the letter," she said softly, without looking up.

"Never received it! Then how do you explain this answer?" he demanded.

"I wrote that note—yes, but not in answer to any communication from you. It was not intended for you. I do not know how it came in your possession. You will see that the upper part of the sheet has been carefully cut off. On the detached part was the name of the person to whom it was addressed."

She raised her eyes, and he saw that there were tears in them, but before he could speak she asked:

"Did you send your letter to me by post or by messenger?"

"Why, I sent it by Tomasso, the little Italian whom I often employed in that way."

"And he brought you the answer?"

"Certainly."

"Ah! I think I understand it now," she said, her expression showing the light of a sudden conviction. "Tomasso, as we afterwards heard, was in the pay of the Earl, who employed him to spy on the movements of people whom he desired to keep under surveillance. It was he, I am now sure, who intercepted your letter and sent back to you this note. His object was to get you out of the way. The note was originally addressed to him—in reply to his proposal of marriage—and he cut off his own name and sent it to you."

Camperton listened like one in a trance. Then he cried out sharply:

"Do you mean to say you are not engaged to him?"

"Engaged! Why, I hated him! He is a wicked, designing man. And he wasn't a lord at all—he had to fly because he would have been charged with impersonation! The real Earl was ill in an Italian village. It was on account of the worry of it all that I prevailed upon papa to take me home. Oh, Jack—Mr. Camperton! how could you believe such a thing of me?"

Ten minutes later, when they were released from their imprisonment in the lift, they parted with the understanding that they were to meet in the Kingsleys' rooms within an hour. There was a vacant seat at the club dinner that night, and the lift boy received a handsome present for holding his tongue.

B. LOVELL.

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THE ITALIAN'S SECRET.

By John K. Leys.

I.

TIMES were bad in the City. I was sitting in my office one day in a very despondent mood, when my old friend Dan Bunbury walked in. Dan was a good little fellow, honest "as they make 'em," though perhaps a trifle sanguine in disposition—short, stout, fair, and freckled. He helped himself to a cigarette and sat down.

I could see that there was something on his mind, and I waited patiently, chatting about indifferent matters till he should please to unbosom himself. At length it came out.

"Jack," he said abruptly, "I've got hold of a big thing, a very big thing. Would you care to go in with me?"

"Well, I'm obliged to you, old fellow, for the offer," said I; "but I'm bound to tell you that I'm rather in low water just now, so that I must be careful. Still, I dare say I could find a few hundreds for a really good thing, if that would be of any use."

Dan seemed to be scarcely listening. He stole to the door of my room and opened it suddenly, to make sure that no inquisitive boy was at the keyhole.

"It's all right, Dan," said I with a laugh. "I'm too old a bird to allow what is said in this room to be overheard. You may speak freely."

Dan sat down, and tried to light another cigarette, but his hand shook so that he gave it up. I could see that he was labouring under intense excitement.

"Jack," he said to me, "we've been friends since the old Silchester days, and you know I wouldn't let you in for dropping so much as a sov—and there are always risks. So don't think I want to haul you in for this. In fact, it was only after a good deal of bother that I got leave to bring you in with me, as I couldn't raise all the capital required. I'll tell you what it is, on the understanding, of course, that whether you come in with me or not it goes no further without the permission of me and my friend."

"All right. It's a syndicate, I suppose?"

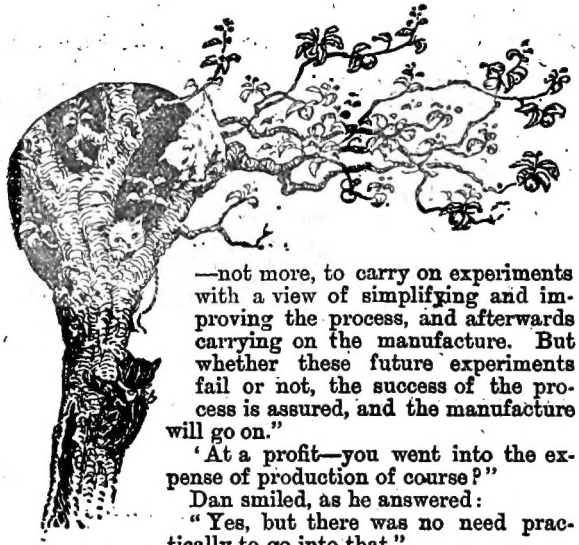
"It's a syndicate, of course. And it's—well, it's saying nothing to say that it's the biggest thing that has ever been brought out, I won't say in London, but on this earth!"

This was interesting, at all events; and I sat regarding Dan as he passed his handkerchief across his brow. For a few moments he was silent, as if lacking the courage to broach the great secret.

"I'll tell you just what happened to me," he burst out at length, "and then you may use your own discretion about it. About six weeks ago I met at dinner at a friend's house an elderly man, an Italian, who was described to me as a great scientist. Chemistry, and particularly metallurgy, was said to be his department. We fell into talk after dinner, and he seemed to take to me, as I did to him. When he heard that I was in the City, he seemed interested, and hinted that perhaps we might be of service to each other by and by. We exchanged cards, and I found that he had taken a quiet place down in the country, that he might be able to carry on his chemical experiments without any interruption.

"He asked me to go and see him, and he told me then that he was making experiments for the manufacture of a substance in great demand, and that it was possible that he might ask my help to provide a little capital to perfect the experiments and bring out the invention. I said I would be happy to consider the matter, for I knew that nothing pays better than getting into a good invention at the start, and the subject dropped.

"Two days ago I had a wire from the Italian saying, 'I have succeeded. Come and see me to-night.' I went and found the old boy in a state of great excitement—and no wonder. His experiments had succeeded. He repeated them before my eyes next morning, and I am convinced that he has found a method of manufacturing the—the substance I spoke of. And I agreed to go in partnership with him. We want three thousand pounds



—not more, to carry on experiments with a view of simplifying and improving the process, and afterwards carrying on the manufacture. But whether these future experiments fail or not, the success of the process is assured, and the manufacture will go on."

'At a profit—you went into the expense of production of course?"

Dan smiled, as he answered:

"Yes, but there was no need practically to go into that."

"The profit would be so large?"

Dan nodded.

"We want three thousand pounds, as I told you," he said, "and as it happens I can't scrape more than two thousand together just at present. So, if you like you can come in to the extent of the odd thousand."

"But you haven't told me yet what is to be manufactured."

Dan looked this way and that, bent over to me, and whispered in my ear:

"It's—*gold!*"

"I knew you would laugh at it," said Dan without a trace of annoyance in his voice. "So should I have laughed if any one had said to me a week ago what I have said to you. But it's true, all the same. Listen now. Why should it be beyond the power of modern chemistry to manufacture gold any more than diamonds, or sugar, or a dozen other things that are artificially made every day? You know that diamonds can be made—true, real diamonds, though not of a size big enough to make it pay commercially. I repeat, why not gold? There is said to a certain number of simple elements in Nature. But that number is always changing—in the first place because chemists are always finding new substances, and in the second place because every now and then somebody finds out *that what had been supposed to be a simple substance is in reality compound*—in other words, he has resolved the thing into its constituent elements. Now, that is just what the Professor has done with gold. He has found out what it is made of, and having done that it is comparatively an easy matter to put the constituent metals into a melting-pot and fuse them into gold. Of course I don't know what these metals are, but I know that silver is the principal one. You can bring your own silver to be the subject of the test experiment, if you like.

"But I beg you, my dear fellow, to be very careful that you don't breathe a hint to anyone of what is going on; for you can see that if it were even suspected that gold could be manufactured, there would soon be a thousand chemists trying to discover the secret, and it could not be long till it was found out."

I assured him that I would be discretion itself.

"The thing has been done," repeated Dan. "Gold has been made under my very eyes, and if you like you shall see it done yourself. Now, what do you think of it?"

"I can scarcely say just yet," said I. "I won't insult you by declaring that whatever you say to me I believe implicitly; and I am awfully obliged to you for putting what seems a tremendously good thing in my way. But the fact is, a thousand pounds means a great deal to me, and I am bound to be cautious. Granting that your friend is honest, it is possible that he may to some extent deceive himself, especially as to the cost of production. You know all inventors are sanguine. There may be a hitch somewhere. So I think I would like a day or two to think it over."

"Quite right, old man," exclaimed Dan. "No harm in being cautious, especially when your caution will serve for both of us. Send me a line to-morrow, if possible, saying, 'I am off,' or 'I am on.' If you decide to go in for it (supposing that you are satisfied about the success of the experiments), meet me to-morrow at Waterloo at four sharp, and we will run down to the Professor's at once. I think you will find that the discovery will stand any test you like to apply to it."

On this understanding we parted.

II.

I AM free to confess that although I had preserved my *sang froid* in my friend's presence, I was secretly as much excited as he was himself. I knew enough of chemistry to be aware that theoretically the resolution of a supposed simple substance into more elementary metals or gases was quite possible. Why, as Dan asked, why should gold be any exception to this law? Supposing that the Professor was not what I had been at first inclined to believe him, a vulgar charlatan—supposing he had really mastered this secret of Nature, what a vista was opened for any one who should be associated with him in the transcendent discovery! In the long run, of course, commerce would be brought to a stand still, and finally adapted to a new medium of exchange. Debts, whether public or private, would cease to exist. Every man belonging to a country which had a gold standard would offer to pay his debt at once. The terrible title of Creditor would henceforth be but an empty name. The distinction between poverty and wealth would exist no longer; or rather it would only apply to the possession or lack of land, of flocks and herds, of actual, tangible goods.

But of course we should take care that that should not happen during our lives. Till death claimed us we should be more powerful than kings. We should have the world in chains at our feet.

It would be perfectly practicable for me to found a colony, nay, to found an empire! What monarch could lack subjects who scorned the idea of taking tribute, and offered his people absolute security against want? Putting these more ambitious dreams aside, it was evident that if the Professor had rightly estimated the effect of his discovery—on which point I must of course satisfy myself before I proceeded a step—I would be a millionaire twice, ten times, twenty times over; and that surely was enough for any reasonable man.

It is not to be wondered at that I slept but little that night. And with the morning light I came to a decision. I would go down and see the Professor, taking a piece of pure silver with me. I would use the utmost care to make sure that there was no trickery anywhere

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—that by no possibility could gold be introduced into the crucible without my knowing it. I would be doubly, trebly, on my guard against all possibility of deception.

I would bring the silver back to town with me next day, never allowing it to be out of my possession a single moment till it reached the hands of the London silversmith; and I would abide by his verdict. If he assured me that gold was present with the silver in any considerable quantity, I would risk my money, in the hope of winning the largest prize man ever played for.

If there was no gold, or but a trace of it, along with the silver, I would say that the speculation was too risky for me, and leave it alone. This resolution I carried out.

I purchased a small ingot of pure silver from a firm of undoubted respectability, sent my friend the message we had agreed on, and met him at Waterloo the same afternoon at the hour he had named.

He had already wired to the Italian that we were coming; and as there was now no reason why I should be kept in ignorance of the name of my host, Dan told me that he had the Professor's permission to say that his name was Giovanni Galzoni.

Chadwick Hall, the house which the Professor had taken, stood in a remote corner of Hampshire, though not very far from a wayside railway station. It was a fine old place, but the appearance of the house was spoilt by a new building of red brick close by, which I rightly guessed to be the laboratory.

The Professor was a tall, dignified-looking man of perhaps sixty years of age. He wore his silver-grey hair cut short, and a long white moustache, which made him look like a retired colonel. He spoke with a slightly foreign accent, but his English was faultless.

As we stood together in the hall a door opened, and a girl appeared on the threshold.

"Come, Nora," said the Professor, "and let me introduce a new acquaintance to you." He pronounced her name distinctly—Miss Leonora Nugent; and I found myself bowing before a tall, slender creature with a sweet smile, a dazzling complexion, glorious black hair, and eyes of a ravishing blue. She smiled as she gave me her hand, but she smiled yet more frankly when Dan laid his great honest paw in her slender fingers, and I remembered that in all probability they were old acquaintances. Dan had not mentioned Miss Nugent to me at all, which I looked upon as a bad sign.

We sat down to dinner almost at once, and I may as well say that I fell head over ears in love with Nora, as Signor Galzoni called her, from the moment when my eyes first lighted on her face in the hall of the old house. It was plain to my jealous eye that Dan was in the same boat; and while I saw the awkwardness of playing the rival to Dan, who had brought me to the house, I could not bring myself to the point of steeling my heart against Nora's charms because my friend felt them as well as I.

For the rest of the evening however, Dan had his innings, and I was barely able to exchange half a dozen words with the Professor's beautiful niece. After dinner, Signor Galzoni took me to one side, and while Nora was singing Italian and Irish airs for Dan's benefit, I was being treated to a lecture upon inorganic chemistry, of which I comprehended very little.

We retired to rest early, intending that the whole of the following afternoon should be devoted to an investigation of the Professor's power to manufacture the most precious of metals.

Nora presided at the breakfast table with the charming grace of a girl matron, and when she withdrew at the conclusion of the meal, she left one of us, at all events, more madly in love with her than ever.

The Professor took us out to smoke a cigarette before commencing the labours of the day.

"I understand," he said, turning round sharply in my direction, "that my young friend has communicated to you frankly and unreservedly, under the seal of confidence, our hopes, and our necessities, and that you are prepared, when satisfied of the genuineness of the discovery, to join the scheme, and bring capital into it to the extent of one thousand pounds?"

"That is so," said I.

"I have been considering the matter very carefully," he broke off, turning to Dan, "and I am quite convinced that the only safe way to put our new metal on the market is to do it ourselves—in other words to set up as dealers in bullion. This will make it easy and natural for us to go in rather extensively for coining gold, and will make it possible for us to increase our wealth in a hundred ways at the same time. To establish a business of this kind will require some time, as well as some capital. Then there will be the furnaces to be built, metals and chemicals to be bought, as well as powerful dynamos—But I said three thousand pounds would do, and I will make it do. We must have no more noses in the dish. That is absolutely fixed in my mind."

To this both Dan and I warmly assented, and then the doctor proceeded to explain to me something of his method.

"The process is simplicity itself," he said. "I put into a crucible a number of metals, the principal one being silver. What the other ingredients are is part of my secret, but not the most important part of it. I care very little who knows what is added to the silver; the secret chiefly consists in knowing the exact weights of the substances added. All depends upon that, and you will excuse me if I say no more on that subject in the meantime. You will have every facility for seeing that no gold is introduced into the mass in the crucible—indeed I shall ask you to do me the favour of adding the various elements yourself, and you will easily be able to judge by the weight of what I give you to put into the crucible, whether it is gold or not.

"The mass, when fused, is subjected to a very powerful electric current, for the purpose of disintegrating the molecules of which the different substances are composed, and resolving them into their constituent atoms. During all this time the crucible will remain suspended over the furnace, and will be entirely within your sight.

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When the process is completed, the molten metal will be cast in a mould, and you will take this, or part of it, to a metallurgist of your own choosing in London, and he will tell you whether gold is in the mass or not, and if so in what proportions. And now shall we go into the laboratory?"

We went up to the red brick structure which I had noticed the previous evening. It was a spacious apartment, filled with the usual array of scientific instruments, prominent among which was an immense "dynamo,"—a furnace, capable of developing a high temperature, shelves with metals, drugs in bottles, and the other paraphernalia of a chemical laboratory.

While the Professor secured the door, Dan, who had visited the place before, took me forward to the furnace, and showed me a small earthenware crucible, which he asked me to examine. It was fitted with a lid, pierced with two tiny holes for passing the wires of the electrical machine, and a larger one for introducing a rod of fireclay for stirring the mass of molten metal.

The furnace was already in full blast. I produced the ingot of silver which I had brought with me, and under the Professor's superintendence it was soon reduced to a molten state. The wires from the great magnet were then introduced, and a powerful current was kept flowing through it. Next, I poured into the crucible various substances, of which I did not know the nature, but which I knew from the weight could not contain gold, which the Italian handed to me from time to time. As soon as each powder—they were almost all in the form of powder—was slipped through the hole in the lid of the crucible, the Professor stirred the molten mass, to make sure that the contents of the crucible were thoroughly mixed. This went on for some time, and after all the ingredients had been added, the force of the electric current was greatly increased.

During this process I could not detect the least trace of anxiety on the Professor's face. He wore the serene look of a man confident of victory. From first to last I never took my eyes off the crucible, and I was ready to swear that it was a physical impossibility for the Italian, however ready he might have been to deceive us, to touch the crucible without our knowledge.

At length Galzoni announced that the gold had begun to form in the vessel, and another half hour of waiting was all that was required. At the end of that time the contents of the crucible were poured out into three moulds of about equal size; and when the metal was cool, one of the ingots thus formed was handed to me, another to my friend, while the Professer kept the third for purposes of further experiment.

Nora appeared at luncheon, and when we rose from table she strolled out into the garden with me, while our host discussed with Dan the first steps which had to be taken for turning the great discovery into a commercial success. Naturally I made the most of my opportunity, and Nora told me a good deal about herself during our *tete-à-tete*. She was the daughter of the penniless son of an Irishman of good family, who had married an Italian girl. Her mother also was dead, and she had no friend but her guardian, who had brought her up as his own child, and had told her to call him uncle. I gathered that although he was never unkind to her he neglected her a good deal, that she was singularly ignorant of the world, and that Signor Galzoni dissuaded her from accepting any advances which had from time to time been made to her by people they had casually met in the course of their wanderings.

Ever since she could remember, Nora and her guardian had been wanderers on the face of the earth, seldom remaining long in one town or country. The Professor's friends were all men of his own age and nationality; Nora had never known what it was to have a friend of her own sex, and I could see that she was pining for companionship. It was too soon, of course, to declare the nature of my feelings for this beautiful and lonely girl, and yet I often thought afterwards that she must surely have guessed from my manner, from my very silence, many things that my lips did not dare to utter.

In the evening Dan and I returned to London.

Next day I gave the ingot I had taken from the Professor's crucible to a metallurgist, and a few days later I received from him a report as to its nature. My heart beat as I unfolded the sheet of paper; and yet I fully expected to see the magic name that would be a pledge to me of untold wealth.

I was not disappointed. The ingot contained gold to a considerable amount, in quantity quite sufficient to make its production immensely profitable. The bulk of the mass was composed of silver, which was of course of its original value. There was some alloy, worthless, or nearly so.

That very day I made the necessary arrangements, and sent Dan a cheque for one thousand pounds to be transmitted to the Professor as my share in the joint enterprise.

III.

In the course of a few weeks we had opened a bullion merchant's office in Paris, of which Dan Bunbury took charge. Already the gold was being turned out in considerable quantities, and was disposed of by being coined, or sold to goldsmiths. We had all agreed that it would be safer to begin in a small way, and extend our operations by degrees.

One day in November I was siezed with an uncontrollable desire to see Nora again; and as I had a tolerable excuse for calling on her guardian, I ran down to Chadwick Hall without giving any notice of my coming.

The Professor, I was told, was too busy to see me, but on my asking for Miss Nugent, I was shown into a small room on the ground floor, where, in the dusk of the November day, I found her alone, gazing out on the rain-sodden, desolate trees.

Her sweet face bore traces of recent tears, but my heart beat fast to see that a lovely blush overspread her cheeks as she turned and saw me.

It was evident that she was in a state of great dejection, and it seemed to be beyond my power to cheer her. At length in desperation I ventured to beg her to tell me the cause of her unhappiness. For answer she turned away and hid her face against the elbow of the couch on which she was sitting. She was evidently trying hard not to break down, but the tears would come. I went down on my knees beside her, and whispered to her that I could not bear to see her grief, because I loved her better than my life. In hackneyed phrases, I dare say, but in words that came straight from my heart, I tried to make her believe that I was only speaking the truth—that nothing on earth was of any consequence to me compared with her happiness, and I implored her to tell me what was troubling her. I took her little hands in mine, and by degrees I drew her nearer to me till her head rested on my breast.

Then in broken words she confessed that in happier

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circumstances she would have listened to me—she might have loved me, but at present, it was not to be thought of.

She owed a duty to her guardian, and he wished her to marry a countryman of his own, who had come to England for the purpose of pressing his suit. The utmost I could wring from her was a promise that she would give me an opportunity of speaking to her guardian, and that she would not marry anyone without letting me know.

How long we sat there I cannot tell. The twilight had faded into night when I suddenly recollected that I had an important engagement in London for a late hour that evening, which must be kept at all costs. I pulled out my watch, and found that I had not too much time to catch the last train which would enable me to be in town in time to keep my engagement.

Hurriedly I told Nora that I must go, and I was in the act of bidding her good-bye, when I heard the sound of voices and footsteps in the hall. A moment later the Professor entered the room.

He started on seeing me, and greeted me rather coldly, saying that he had been under the impression that I had gone back to town.

Unwilling to miss the opportunity of pleading my cause in person, I resolved to use the few minutes that were left in telling Signor Galzoni of my love for Nora, and making formal application for her hand. The Professor listened in silence, and he did not, as I had feared he would, tell me that what I asked was out of the question. He invited me to stay over the night, adding that he would give me an answer in the morning. When I explained to him that this was impossible, as I must return to London immediately, he said it would be unnecessary for me to walk through the rain to the station, as he had ordered a fly to come for him that evening, and it would be at the door in a minute or two.

This relieved my mind, and I recurred to the subject of my passion for Nora. He heard me patiently, but said that he must have a day or two to think it over—a request which was certainly not unreasonable, and which made me hope that he would not forbid the engagement. But while we had been talking, the minutes had been flying, and on looking at my watch, I saw that in foolishly depending on the arrival of the fly I had lost my train. There was just the possibility that it might be a little late, and that I might catch it if I took to my heels at once. I caught up my hat, and disregarding the Italian's entreaties that I would stay over the night, or wait till the next train, I shook him by the hand, and literally ran from the house.

The distance was not great, but to my dismay I saw the steam from the engine of the approaching train while I was still some little way from the station. Putting on a trifle more speed, I raced on, vaulted over a fence which shut out the public from a short cut across a siding, and reached the platform just as the train started again.

A man with a red beard was standing idly on the platform watching the retreating carriages. I dashed past him, and making a supreme effort tore open the door of a compartment and sprang in. Turning immediately to close the door behind me, I saw, to my surprise, that the red-bearded man, stimulated, apparently, by my example, had suddenly made up his mind that he would not be left behind. He was in the act of clambering into the adjoining compartment.

I reached town, and drove to my rooms, where I changed my clothes for evening dress; and I was getting into my hansom again, when I noticed a man lounging (in spite of the rain) against the railings on the opposite side of the street. As I passed him he looked steadily the other way. But I felt certain that he was none other than the man who had followed me into the railway carriage that afternoon. Certainly both men had red beards. It struck me as a curious coincidence, but it was not until afterwards that it occurred to me that the man might be a spy.

IV.

SIGNOR GALZONI had promised to send me his answer by letter. But two days went by, and I heard nothing from him. I was getting uneasy, when on the morning of the third day a letter bearing the Chadwick postmark was put into my hand. It was not from Galzoni. The moment my eyes fell on the handwriting on the envelope, I knew that the letter was from Nora.

I tore it open, and my face blanched as I read. In a few tear-blotted words Nora bade me good-bye. She assured me that this was a final farewell, that it would be impossible for us to meet again. She was leaving England, she said, with her guardian, and before the letter reached me, they would be far away from the Hall Almost in so many words she told me that I possessed her heart, but she said that she was not free, and we must part.

Without waiting to see whether a train was about to start for Hampshire, I rushed downstairs, caught a hansom, and drove at the horse's best pace to Waterloo.

It was possible, I thought, that something had occurred to delay the Professor's departure—it was possible, even if I was too late, I might find out where he had gone. Of course he would return, or at least it would be easy for me to find him by-and-bye.

But I feared that his intention was to separate Nora from me permanently, or at least until after her marriage to the suitor whom he preferred. Either out of regard for him, or for some reason, he had resolved that Nora and I should not meet again; and he had asked for delay only that he might arrange his plans for placing her beyond my reach. But I determined that I would not be so easily baulked.

When I arrived at the Hall I found it deserted. Not a living creature was about the place. I could glean no information at the village or the railway station, except that the station-master assured me that the Italian had not left by rail.

I was in despair, when it occurred to me that I might be able to learn something from the owner of the Hall. Even if he could tell me nothing as to the Professor's

present movements, he might be willing to give me the names and addresses of the references he had given when he took the house, and through them I might be able to trace him. I had no doubt that he would communicate with Dan Bunbury shortly, but I could not brook the delay.

I got the landlord's address, and went part of the way by rail. The rest of the distance, some five or six miles, I had to walk.

I had scarcely set out to cover this piece of country, when a deluge of rain drove me to take shelter at a wayside public-house. As I ran up to it, a man whom I took to be the ostler came out of the tumbledown stable. I met him face to face, and to my amazement I recognised him as the man who had followed me to my lodgings three days before! I was thunderstruck. It seemed absolutely impossible that the man could have followed me from Chadwick, much less from London, without my knowing it. And what he could be following me at all for, I could not conceive. I resolved to question him, and went after him into the stable, but I could make nothing of him. He stoutly denied that he had ever set eyes on me before, and in his turn began to put some questions to me, which I considered an impertinence. I left him, therefore, almost persuading myself that my imagination had been playing me a trick, and went into the inn.

A cart of coals and a carrier's cart were standing before the door, and the carters were drying their steaming garments at the fire of the inn kitchen. As there was no fire in the parlour, and the room looked damp and cheerless to the last degree, I went into the kitchen, and made my way to the ample hearth, calling at the same time for a pint of ale.

As I advanced, a woman whom I had not at first noticed turned sharply round, and then, after a moment's hesitation, retreated by a side door. There were four or five labourers, whose work had apparently been stopped by the rain, seated on a bench that ran along one side of the kitchen; and as I stood drying my clothes a dispute sprang up between one of them and the driver of one of the carts which were at the door.

I paid no attention to it, but took a vacant chair in the chimney corner; and as I sat there the combined influence of my fatigue, the ale I had drunk, and the warmth of the fire, made me drowsy. Suddenly I started up, wide awake, convinced for the moment that the voice of the man I had been thinking about all day, and of whom I had been dreaming at that moment, was actually sounding in my ears. I started up, half expecting to see the Italian's grave face looking down into mine, and found that the kitchen was nearly empty.

The labourers had gone back to their work, the carrier's cart had disappeared, and the other, laden with coals, was slowly surmounting a rising-ground a short distance from the inn-door. The driver, his hands in his pockets, and his slouch-hat drawn over his ears, trudged heavily beside it; and at his side walked, with light, elastic step, the young woman who had left the inn kitchen as I entered it.

There was something in the girl's gait, in her manner of carrying herself, that struck me, and held me a prisoner at the window as long as the cart was in sight.

It was now almost dark, and I would have started at once, but I had eaten nothing since the morning, and I ordered a hasty meal of bread and cheese. As soon as it was despatched I called for the reckoning, and rose to go.

At that moment a poor old creature, bent with age and rheumatism, came through the kitchen, and as she passed me she thrust an envelope into my hand. It contained nothing; but there was written on it, in place of an address, the words:

If you value your own safety, stay where you are for the night, and return to London by some indirect way.

I rushed after the woman who had given it to me, but she maintained that she had picked it up on the floor, and that as she could not read, she had guessed that it belonged to me. For a moment or two I felt bewildered. Then I recollected the voice I had heard, as if speaking in a dream—and that poorly-clad, slender form—good Heavens! was it possible?

I dashed out of the house, and ran up the ascent up which I had seen the cart pass a quarter of an hour before.

Although it was now dark, I had no doubt that I would overtake the heavily laden cart, unless I came to a cross road, and in order to avoid this risk, I pushed on at the top of my speed. I had not even time to think what it meant that Signor Galzoni should be escaping in disguise.

After running a mile and a half I stopped and heard the low rumble that told me the cart was near at hand. I ran on, overtook it, and saw to my joy that the same two figures were plodding on by its side.

I passed them, turned, and looked the supposed carter straight in the face. It was the Professor, beyond a doubt. And the country girl at his left hand was none other than my own peerless Nora!

"You, here, Signor!" I exclaimed, with affected surprise. "Pray, what does this mean?"

"You fool!" burst out the Professor—and I noticed that he now spoke without the slight foreign accent I had always observed hitherto—"You fool! You can't say I didn't warn you!"

So saying he hurriedly turned his ungainly vehicle down a narrow lane which we were passing, and after going on for a few yards in this new direction stopped it. He then went back to the mouth of the lane, and stood there, in the rain and darkness, listening, anxiously listening. Then, apparently satisfied, he returned to the cart, near which Nora and I were standing.

"Signor Galzoni," said I, going up to him, "or whatever your true name may be, I think your conduct is strange and suspicious to the last degree. But, no matter what you may have done or left undone, that does not affect your ward. I repeat that I wish to make her my wife. You are evidently in great danger. Will you trust Miss Nugent to me? I am ready to swear to you that we shall be married as soon as—"

"She would be no more safe with you than with me!" exclaimed the Professor.

"Not safe with me! Why not? Do you mean that I am in danger as well as you?"

The answer was a harsh laugh. An angry retort was on my tongue, but I remembered the red-bearded man at the railway-station, in the London street, at the wayside inn, and I remained silent.

"Look here, girl," he said turning roughly to Nora, who had not uttered a word,—"time presses, and it's going to be a wet night. Will you stick to me, or will you go with this young fellow, who seems to run straight, though he is a most thundering fool. Or will you go off on your own hook? Hang it if I don't think that would be the best thing for you to do, for the chances

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are that by morning both he and I will be in chokee.—
—Now, look sharp—which is it to be?"

For answer Nora stole to my side, and laid her little wet hand in mine.

The Professor's voice, when he next spoke, sounded as if he felt relieved by her decision.

He advised that we should separate, a counsel which I was willing, indeed eager, to follow; and it was agreed that Nora and I should continue along the lane, while the Professor backed his cart into the high road and continued his journey.

I sent Nora on a little way in advance, while I waited behind to help Galzoni to get his cart back into the road, not a very easy matter, as there was no room in the lane to turn the horse and cart.

We had nearly reached the road when we heard the sharp sound of horses' hoofs. I forced my way into the hedge that bounded the lane on my left, and found that the fence was so thick and tall that I was in a place of comparative safety.

But before the Professor could follow my example the mounted police were upon him. He made no resistance, and as soon as he had been secured, two of the constables leapt into the cart and began tossing the coals which it contained into the roadway.

They had not worked long before one of them gave a cry.

"It's here, sir" he shouted, "and mortal 'eavy it be!"

I had heard enough. I turned and ran without a sound over the rain-softened grass till I had overtaken Nora.

She was of course on the other side of the hedge, but I called softly to her, and as soon as I came to a gap I rejoined her.

We walked all that night, for we did not dare to seek shelter, resting occasionally under a haystack, and in the morning we returned to London by the Great Western line.

That very day, following the advice of my solicitor, I gave information to the police to the effect that I had been swindled out of a thousand pounds by the man who called himself Galzoni. I was unwilling to join in the prosecution of Nora's guardian, but it was necessary my lawyer told me, that I should take some step to dissociate myself in a marked way from the swindler, seeing that the police had evidently suspected that I was an accomplice rather than a dupe. As it turned out, the charge I brought against Galzoni was never investigated, as there were several which had the priority to mine; but as the booty had been recovered when Galzoni was arrested, I recovered the greater part of my thousand pounds.

Dan was less fortunate. He had associated himself more closely with the rogue than I had done. He had never suspected for a moment that the gold he was dealing in was merely a fraction of that which the so-called Professor had obtained from his numerous dupes. He thought, as I did, up to the last moment, that it had been honestly manufactured. But he considered, wisely enough, that he would not get the police to believe that he had been so credulous. He left his affairs for me to wind up, and made tracks for Johannesburg, where he has since done well.

It turned out that "the Professor," had been playing this game for years, frequently changing the scene of his operations. Most of his dupes were so much afraid of the ridicule they would meet with if they complained in public, that they refused to prosecute, even when they had been rather badly hit. The peculiarity of his scheme of plunder was that his dupes kept his secret almost better than he could keep it himself, for fear that other people would share the treasure which they believed they were about to enjoy. Of course, it was necessary that each should believe himself the only man whom the Professor had taken into his confidence, and I have no doubt that the reason of his lying to me about the fly, and trying to persuade me to stay overnight was that he had a visitor from the city in the house at the time, and he feared that he and I might know each other, and might meet on our way back to town.

I puzzled for some time over the mystery of the gold appearing in the crucible, and I came to the conclusion that it must have been introduced by means of a hollow in the rod of fire-clay with which the Professor had mixed the molten metal. I now understood why he had been so particular in keeping secret the weights of the added substances. It was in order to guard against a demand that the weight of the resulting ingot should be compared with the weight of what had been seen to go into the crucible. No doubt he had kept part of the ingot in order to prevent its weight being ascertained.

Notwithstanding my most earnest entreaties, Nora refused to marry me until some time after the Professor's trial, for, innocent as she was personally, she had learnt the secret of his misdeeds before his flight, she had accompanied him when he tried to escape, and she would not compromise me so long as there was a fear that she would be involved in his punishment. But that fear has long since gone by. For three years Nora and I have been living happily together as man and wife. The Professor must be out of prison by this time, but we have not seen him, and our hope is that his path and ours may never cross again.

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A CLEVER WOMAN.

MY Lady Wynne's jewels had been stolen, and the old house of Wynne was in a dreadful commotion. Doors were being banged; maids stood in groups discussing this thing which had happened in their midst, and offering their own opinions and suggestions. They were glad of a little excitement, it is true, for Wynne in the winter was a dreary house, and their tongues went quickly. Her ladyship's companion moved through them, hearing everything and saying nothing, and carrying all she heard to my lady upstairs. But my lady was not thinking of the servants' sayings and doings. All her thoughts were with her husband, and what he would say when he came home, and found the jewels that the wives of Wynne had worn for generations gone.

"Oh, hush, Miss Egerton," she said, raising her pretty dark head. "I do not care what the housemaid thinks. She knows nothing about it."

Edith Egerton smiled her amiable smile, that showed so perfectly her small white teeth, and shaking back her golden curls, answered my lady softly.

"One never can pay enough of attention in these cases."

In the bright, dark eyes of the young mistress of Wynne the tears were gathering again.

"Oh, whatever will Sir Charles say!" she burst out. "I know he thought me too young to take care of them. He said I was the youngest bride that had ever worn them yet, and I'm sure no one knew where the key was but Emily and yourself."

Miss Egerton smiled again.

"Maids are always supposed to be perfectly trustworthy, but of course we can do nothing until the detectives come," she said insinuatingly.

Lady Wynne looked at her sharply, but she did not speak. Somehow she did not like that soft, cooing voice.

"It was so strange," her ladyship began again in a few minutes. "To think that nothing should be taken but my jewels."

Yes, it certainly was strange. One of the side-doors had been left open overnight, although no maid had been found to own the fault, and when my lady woke in the morning, it was to see her jewel-box lying open on the floor, and the keys dangling from it. Ringing furiously for her maid, she searched wildly in every corner of the room.

But it was useless; the jewels were gone, and all her ladyship's tears could not bring them back. Her husband was away, and the young girl-wife of Wynne was at her wit's end. True, her self-possessed companion was there to advise and direct, but Alicia Wynne felt strangely distrustful of the golden-haired, apple-blossom complexioned little creature just then. She seemed to know so well what to do, think, and say, that her ladyship felt dreadfully silly and girlish beside her.

But the detective was come and was summoning the household together, and practical Miss Egerton was ordering the servants. Not that there was much to be got out of them. They had seen nothing, heard nothing, until her ladyship's bell had aroused them, and even then it was only from Emily, the maid, that they learnt what had happened. Although Emily herself could tell him little, the detective questioned her very closely. It was evident from his manner that he suspected her, and anyone watching Edith Egerton would have seen a triumphant glance shoot from her eyes. As for young Lady Wynne she could only cry and wish Sir Charles would come home, and within himself the detective wished that, too. He felt a slight disgust for all those women, except Miss Egerton. There seemed to be an air of business about her.

At last Sir Charles came. He scarcely gave the jewels a thought, until he had assured his girl-wife that he would rather have them lost than have her in hysterics. And his words had the effect of driving the tears from her dark eyes as the sun drives the morning mist away, and she was ready to talk the affair over with her husband in a manner that would have astonished the detective, who had put her down as a senseless baby.

"You say that only your maid knew of the place where the key lay?"

"Yes—and Miss Egerton," she added. Her husband went on speaking, but he did not notice how silent his wife had grown. The words—"and Miss Egerton—" kept sounding in her ears, and seemed to point to the golden-haired little woman. She shuddered and tried to drive the thought away, but it only forced itself upon her more strongly. Suddenly her husband turned to her and said:

"You must dismiss this maid of yours."

Lady Wynne rose to her feet, and answered with an angry glance towards Miss Egerton:

"I shall not. Whoever stole my jewels, it was not Emily."

She saw the amused look Edith Egerton exchanged with her husband, and the young wife's temper rose, for in her heart she knew they thought she was a baby, hardly fit to manage for herself. Sir Charles smiled down on her, as if he smiled on a child, and said coaxingly:

"We are not too sure of that, but I think she had better go."

The soft eyes of the lady flashed fire, and she was resolved to fight it out. But gentle Miss Egerton and her husband were too strong for her, and she was obliged to give in with a burst of tears. But as she left the room, she looked at Edith Egerton with angry, suspicious eyes, and with a heavy heart sought her maid.

Emily Miller was a tall, superior girl, entirely devoted to her young mistress. Alicia had brought her with her to the old house of Wynne—when she had come to it a bride, and Emily had been more a companion than any one else, ever since. And the sight of my lady in tears drew a hurried exclamation from her lips, as she started forward to meet her.

"Is there anything wrong, my lady?" she asked quickly.

"Oh, yes!" sobbed herladyship. "They are accusing you of stealing my jewels, and they say I must send you away."

The words came trembling out, and Emily stood listening as one dazed.

"Me take your jewels, my lady?" she repeated slowly.

"They are saying it, and they make me promise to send you away."

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Emily had gathered her wits together again, and, as she drew herself up, she said proudly:

"I would not stay in a house where I was suspected for worlds!"

"Oh, Emily, I don't suspect you, and I don't want to send you away."

"I don't blame you, my lady," the maid answered quietly. "Miss Egerton's at the bottom of it."

Alicia Wynne looked up quickly, but she did not speak. Although she did suspect Miss Egerton, she was too wise to discuss the matter with her maid.

Emily Miller left, and Wynne settled down to the old winter life again. The jewels had not been found, although the detectives had worked hard, and although every little thing had been thoroughly sifted. And my lady went about amongst them with her sweet, ready smile, and saw more than any one of them thought with her bright dark eyes. In fact, she was the cleverest detective of them all, as the future was to prove.

* * * * *

"I have not had a chance yet, but you shall have them as soon as possible."

"It will be better to get them out of here. Are you sure they are quite safe?"

"Quite," and the speaker laughed lightly. "But if you come this day week, I think it will be all right. That lynx-eyed wretch is going to a dinner-party. She has made a point of staying at home of late."

"Very well, then! Good night."

The sound of heavy footsteps crashing through the brushwood followed his words, and Alicia Wynne came out of her hiding-place. But it was not on the man her eyes were fixed, but on the little graceful figure of a golden-haired woman, gliding through the misty light. A peculiar smile parted her red lips, and she said quietly to herself:

"It will not be my fault if I do not wear my diamonds next season."

* * * * *

"Are you going to Mrs. Vane's to-night?" asked Sir Charles that day week.

"Yes."

"Well, I'll meet you there. I have very important business to transact at Carnick to-day."

His wife smiled sweetly, and a peculiar gleam shot from her eyes as her husband strode away. And that afternoon her ladyship's tall figure crossed the wintry fields, and sought a little thatched cottage. Emily Miller opened the door in answer to her knock, and my lady entered. A long whispered conversation took place between them, and they seemed to understand the matter in hand fully before her ladyship left.

That night my lady's carriage had hardly issued from the lodge-gates when she furiously pulled the checkstring. The horses were quickly stopped, but before the footman had descended, Alicia had jumped out, and had raised her fair face to the old coachman.

"It's such a lovely night, John, I think I'll walk through the wood while you drive round the road. I'm early anyway."

And before the dumfounded servant could answer, my lady was gone. She walked swiftly to the shade of some bushes, and then stood. Her white dinner-dress was carefully hidden by a long grey cloak, and a passer-by would never have noticed her. Suddenly Emily appeared through the trees, and my lady started forward eagerly. But the maid only shook her head.

"She is gone, my lady. She has left with him by train."

"But she will come back. Her things are all here," gasped Alicia.

"No, my lady. She's had them sent away bit by bit without anyone knowing."

"Why didn't you stop her?"

"I could not, my lady. I had no proof."

Her ladyship's fair face was a study, but the sound of the horses' feet on the frosty road made her start.

"I'll see you again, Emily. I must go now," and she ran away through the trees.

Sir Charles was at a loss to account for his wife's clouded face that night, but if anything his own was more clouded when she told him the story on the way home.

"To think that they should have been so near to us all the time," he said.

"Yes; but I always had my suspicions," and her ladyship leant back and gave her jewels up with a sigh.

* * * * *

The bright lights from the gases of a London mansion shone on all that was fair and lovely—beautiful women, gorgeous dresses and shimmering jewels. Soft laughter and voices filled the air, and everything seemed joyful.

"See! There is young Lady Wynne," whispered one lady to another. "Her new jewels are even finer than the last."

As the other turned to look at the tall, winsome figure of the young mistress of Wynne in her flowing white dress and glistening diamonds, her eye was arrested by another woman—a dainty little creature with dark hair, light blue eyes and glowing complexion, and wonderful sparkling jewels.

"Who is that?" she asked of her friend.

"Oh, the little dark woman! Ethel Macdonald I think the name is. I met her some nights ago."

But the other's eyes had wandered back to young Lady Wynne. There was a puzzled look in my lady's face. Decidedly the dark woman's face was familiar to her—perhaps not exactly the face but the light blue eyes. Suddenly those who were watching her saw the languid, wondering air pass away, and a startled look flash from her eyes. Her husband came to her side instantly, and she turned to him quickly.

"Charles, it's my Norpolli emerald. I could not mistake it."

Her husband looked towards the dark woman to whom she was pointing, and on whose arm shone an emerald of unusual size and brilliance. One rapid glance sufficed him.

"It's Miss Egerton," he said quickly.

"Impossible!"

"It is. She has dyed her hair."

He was gone before she could answer, and she did not see him again in the house that night, and Miss Ethel Macdonald was gone too. But when she reached home that night he was waiting for her, and he had the jewels with him.

"We've lost her, but I've got the jewels. She slipped through our fingers like water. She's the cleverest woman I know."

Alicia was looking at the Norpolli, but her brows went down as her husband mentioned Miss Egerton's cleverness. But clever as the little woman was, some three years after someone very like her was convicted of robbery to a large extent, and made the acquaintance, perhaps not for the first time in her life, with the inside of a prison.

DUNCAN ANSTRUTHER.

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Sandy Carmichael.

By CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc.

BOOK I.—CONCERNING THE FLIGHT FROM CULLODEN MOOR.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty. They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

CHAPTER V.

How the cutter was victualled; how a compass was procured from the snow Biddy, *of Waterford; and how the moonlight failed off Bristol Channel.*

IN the year of grace 1745 sheep-stealing was a hanging offence, as was also the case at the beginning of this present century of enlightenment. But to men of whom the death sentence had already been passed for treason against King George the Second's Government, the reimposition of that penalty made but little difference. A man can be hanged but once. Or, at all events, if the authorities chose to hang him a second time, it would be a matter of utter indifference to him, as, by virtue of the first experience, he would have risen superior to all sublunary pains and indignities.

And so, as Sandy Carmichael was hardened by previous acts of sheep-lifting undertaken at the instance of his former owner, Duncan Carmichael, it may be taken for granted that the cutter's crew set about their hunting with but few qualms of conscience.

They had gone past Charsaig, and had come to an anchor in a wild, desolate little bay shut in by islands, just a mile further south.* There was no human habitation nearer than the tiny village on Lough Swen. There was but slender chance of being disturbed, yet they did not dawdle for all that. It was late afternoon when the little cutter rounded to her anchor, and, after waiting for dusk, Sneyd and O'Neill put ashore. They had not far to go. Just over the ridge they came upon a dozen sheep sleeping in a scattered circle of twenty yards' radius. The dirk did its work. Five were secured before the rest ran away into the darkness.

One by one the carcasses were carried over the rough ground to the shore, a task which occupied them well on into daylight; for, owing to the steepness of the hills which ran down to the loch, a considerable circuit had to be taken with each load. But by the time the first sunbeam had begun to fall on the summit of Clachbheinn in Jura across the sound, the clumsy wooden-stocked anchor was catted and fished once more, and the cutter was standing out from her anchorage close-hauled for the fresh northerly wind. Once outside and clear of the Coinean Island, the sheets were started, and away she went for Lowlandman's Bay.

The two hunters—sheep-stealers, to be more prosaic—took their watch below; that is, they lay down and slept on the ballast, so as to be ready on the instant if they were wanted.

The boy, at his own suggestion, steered. He had been resting all night whilst the others worked, and so was the freshest of the trio. But, had he been dog-tired, he would have volunteered to steer just the same. His notion of the laws of slavery was vague—everybody was not as enlightened in 1745 as we are now—and he considered Sneyd his owner, by right of conquest from Duncan Carmichael. Duncan Carmichael he hated (with some reason), and worked for him through motives of fear alone. Sneyd he liked, as far as it was in his mind to like anybody; and the Irishman he liked too. They had been kind to

* One of the bonniest anchorages on the coast. The author knows it well. Save for a rock, bare at three quarters ebb, right in the middle, the ground is all good. The place is very pretty, and the high shores around have a look suggestive of never being trodden on by human foot.

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him. Very probably, so he thought, there was an ulterior motive to their kindness, but that need not be reckoned with till it appeared. Sufficient for the moment that he had received from them a boon that had never fallen to his lot before—civil treatment, and thanks for services rendered—and he intended to return it by every means that lay in his power. Accordingly he sat now grasping the tiller, steering the cutter on to a far-away point of Jura, and not till he had rounded the northern shoal at the entrance to Lowlandman's Bay did he wake his companions.

A couple of short tacks brought them up to an anchorage, and having made all snug, they hauled the boat up along-side, slung the dead sheep into it, and prepared to go ashore.

As they were shoving off O'Neill gave a joyous exclamation.

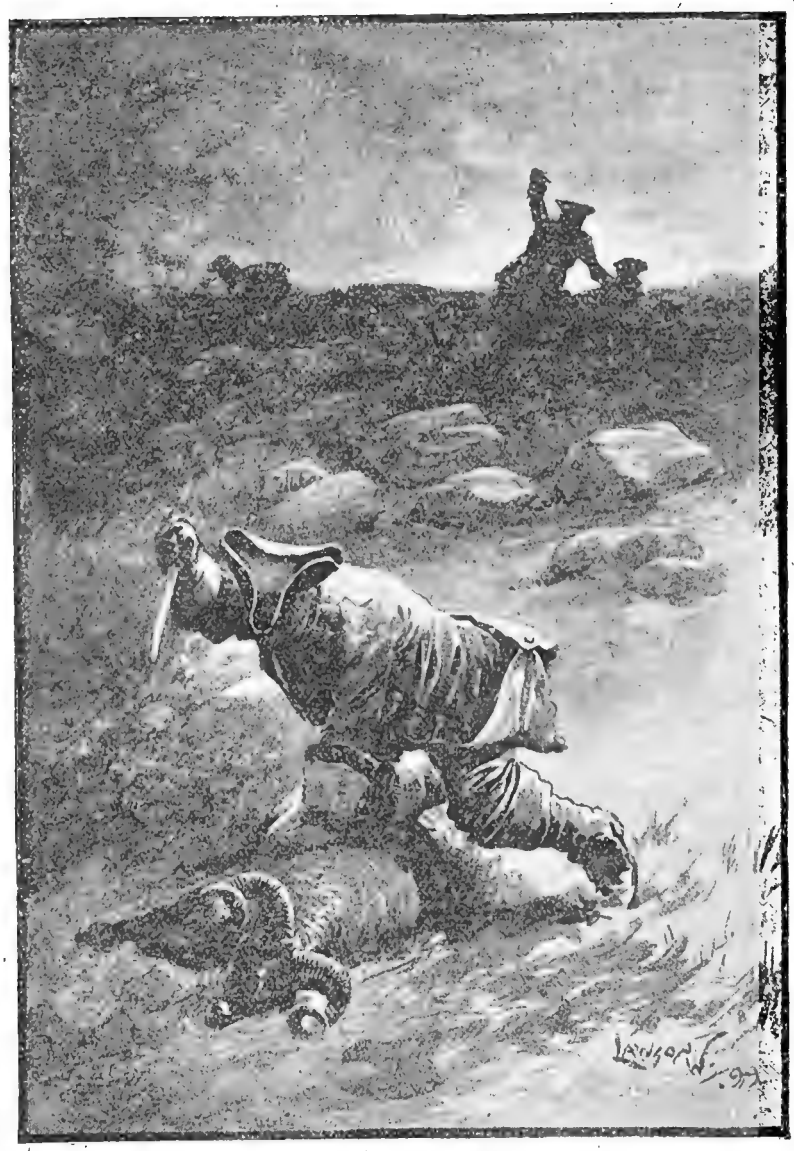
"Yer honour," he cried, "luck's for us. Look there! on the shore fornenst yez. See that drift timber an' them barrels? It's the wreckage of some craft that the tide has sent in to the bay. No smoking of the mutton now till it's as dhry as a leathern scabbard. We can bile out our brine, an' salt it down in the tubs like Christians."

On inspection, the casks proved little the worse for their knocking about. One was certainly smashed by the rocks irretrievably. But three were as good as new, and four others, which had a stave or two started, were not beyond the efforts of an amateur cooper, and by dint of a little labour were soon made sound again.

The first thing done on landing was to light a fire. The iron pot was set on this, and Sandy was placed in charge, with instruction to replenish it with sea water as fast as the contents steamed away. At long intervals it was allowed to boil dry, and the resulting saline matter was put carefully on one side, and the operation continued as before.

Whilst the boy was thus engaged, the other two were busying themselves with the carcasses of the sheep. They had to be hung up, skinned, eviscerated, washed. The hearts, kidneys, livers, were reserved for immediate consumption. The rest was jointed up, rubbed thoroughly with the salt, and spread out on a huge flat stone. Every day for a week was the salt rubbed in afresh, and then the meat was packed away in three of the casks, which it just filled. The other three casks, and the one they had already on board, were filled with fresh water, and all were lashed securely to prevent them shifting in a sea-way. A score of goodly faggots of wood were added to supplement the peats already on board; and with them the storing of the little vessel was completed.

These operations occupied, as I have hinted, a week. During them, all hands were fully employed. After the first burst of work—getting the meat into shape for the salting, and so on—Sneyd did all the shore duties. He collected fuel, attended to the fire and the pot, and rubbed in salt when it was necessary to do so. O'Neill stayed on board the cutter, and gave her sails, standing and running rigging, and in fact almost every part of her, a thorough overhaul; a piece of attention which she had apparently stood in need of for some time past. Her canvas was old, thin, and stained into countless hues by mildew. It was patched in several places, and rent sorely in others. Her standing rigging was bleached and weather-worn. Her running rigging was flattened in the strand, and in many places perilously frayed. The store of lumber in the little hutch forward offered a varied selection of articles; but little was of any use. The ropes there had for the most part been discarded years ago as useless, and the scraps of canvas were one and all extremely rotten. But the Irishman was handy and contriving, and with palm and needle, marline-spike and spunyarn, he did wonders. The upper fabric of the little craft was rejuvenated under his clever fingers, and at the end of the week her gear was almost as sound as if it had just left the rigger's hand, and her canvas as serviceable as though it had but that day come out of



The dirk did its work.

the sailmaker's loft. Sandy Carmichael, too, was not idle during this busy time. When his services were dispensed with as stoker to the salt-kettle, he betook himself to the old boat (which had been towed down thus far), and providing himself with hooks, lines, and shell-fish for bait, sculled himself to various points of the bay, which instinct or experience told him were suitable for the purpose, and periodically brought back a store of dabs, whiting, gurnet, and codling, which

Sandy was placed in charge.

not only gratified present consumption, but when split, sun-dried, and slightly smoked, offered a pleasant change of diet for the future.

In fact, the cutter was fully fitted out save for chart and compass. O'Neill had made a lead-line, and a log-ship and line; but the two other necessaries to navigation were beyond his scope. Neither grew on Jura, and it was useless to expect them there. They must be obtained elsewhere if at all.

So, at four o'clock one morning, when the flood tide had just commenced to run, they got their anchor, and after beating out of the harbour, set a course for Rathlin Island. The tide, what there was of it, was against them then, but they calculated that the cutter would get into the channel between the Irish coast and the Mull of Cantyre in the six hours, and so get full benefit of the ebb, which courses past the Mull at a great rate.*

Keeping in mid-channel for awhile, so as to avoid the Maidens rocks, they held on down the North Channel, with intention of picking up the Isle of Man. Here, if they could not do so before, they might hope to purchase the necessary compass; though they could be by no means sure of doing it, for the islanders then spoke their own language, and had but little intercourse with the adjacent islands of Great Britain and Ireland. However, as it turned out, there was no need to make a landing. Traffic was not so plentiful in those days as it is now, and the craft they sighted even at a distance were few. The first vessel that came within hail of them they let pass without speaking. She had compasses on board, spare ones too, and charts galore, but they had the best possible reason to let her go her ways without trying to beg, borrow, buy, or steal anything of or at all belonging to her. She happened to be a King's ship; comparatively harmless-looking now, with bristling array of artillery hidden behind the closed gun-ports, and her long black hull neatly edged with snowy hammock cloths.

She came up after them hand-over-fist, close-hauled on the starboard tack, shouldering the waves aside with her bluff black bow in a pother of yeasty surge, and doing her good six knots an hour. She sweltered up alongside, bowing majestically over the larger seas, and disdaining to notice the smaller ones; everything spick-and-span, from maintruck to waterline, from the freshly-painted boats in davits to the nettings which hedged in her heavy tops. As she drew ahead and brought her gilded quarter galleries into view, the crew of the little cutter saw a couple of smartly-dressed officers leaning over a rail, and evidently discussing them; but the topic did not hold its interest long, for after a momentary glance they turned their heads away and began to talk of something else. The little half-decked-boat, with its dingy, weather-stained sails and gear, and its unkempt crew, were beneath more than a passing notice; and their mission could have no interest for so great a swell as a King's officer.

No, there was little fear that the frigate would heave-to and send a boat to examine their papers; the little craft was "too insignificant to contain treason." But for all that her crew were not sorry to see the white-sailed, heavily-sparred fabric draw further and further ahead, and finally dive hull down, and then deeper still, over the horizon.

Before the man-of-war ran out of view another sail hove in sight, coming from the southward. She was a vessel of a very different class; a little snow (or, as we say now, brig), born some time early in the seventeenth century, with lofty poop, low waist, and a great beak protruding from her square, tall bow. Her foremast was stepped right up in the eyes of her, and her bowsprit raked out at an angle which approached the perpendicular. She was running up channel with the wind free; yawing wildly, although there was but little sea on; and weltering about, till, from the foam around, one might well have likened her to a whale at play.

She came plunging along, her stained and patched old courses and topsails bellying out like dirty streaked half oranges to the fair wind, and the spritsail under her bowsprit dashing into every sixth or seventh sea which passed beneath her. The cutter approached, close-hauled. A man in a dingy red nightcap was standing on the snow's lofty poop with one hand on the tiller, and the other clutching the weather tiller rope. Straddle-legged beside him was a short, pot-bellied man, with a fierce-looking red face and an enormous purple bottle-nose.

The cutter slid by, and then, putting up her helm and easing out her sheets, ran back again. The red-faced man saw this manœuvre, came aft, and leant over the taffrail. "Cutter ahoy!" he bawled; "what cutter's that?"

"Cutter *Lawful Prize*, in ballast," shouted O'Neill in response, at Sneyd's desire. "Lawrence, master. Twelve days out of Ballachuilish. Bound for Brest av we can make it. What ship's that?"

"Snow *Biddy* of Watherford, laden wud spuds for Glaisca'. Twenty-foive days out of Watherford. Pathrick Muldoon, master. What is it y'are afther?"

"Afther speaking yez, avic," replied O'Neill, edging closer away into the snow's wake.

"It's meself that 'ud ruyther see yez haul away on to yer own coorse again," grumbled he of the bottle-nose. "Ahoy there! sphake what yez want to say now, and don't come any closer. 'Tis the narvous man I am meself wud strangers."

"There isn't a hair of the venerable head of yez I'd harm," responded O'Neill.

The bottle-nosed man turned sharply round. "Forrard there!" he bawled; "cast loose them two brass patareroes an' run 'em out; they be loaded; and stand by wud a hot bacca-pipe. Now then, ye spalpeens," he continued, turning round again, "if yez sheer up alongside, be all the saints, I'll blow yez out of the wather."

* In southerly gales, this race attains the velocity of five knots and upwards.—*Pilot Book.*

"Arrah now, honest man, be raysonable," said O'Neill. "Is it picaroons yez take us for, here under the lee of ancient Oireland?—Hoist that main-tack there, Sandy, or we'll be shootin' past him.—It's in disthress we are, or it isn't me that 'ud be botherin' yez."

"Av it's wather ye're wantin'," growled the bottle-nosed skipper, "I can't help yez. The winds has been bafflin', an' I'm that long out o' port I'm on short rations meself. Run into Belfast loch, an' get yer casks filled there."

"'Tisn't wather we want, Capt'n dear, nor grog neither; ptaise be, we've lashin's o' both. It's a compass we was wantin' to trade from yez, an' a bit chart, if yez had such a thing to spare."

"What's that?" bawled the bottle-nosed man; "put to sea widout a compass, that looks queer. Forrard there! stand by with that hot bacca-pipe. Cutter ahoy! kape her aisy as she's goin', av yez value yer skins."

"Set taut the weather toppin'-lift, yer honour," whispered O'Neill; "an' do you, Sandy, just start them peak-halyards. 'Tis hard to keep her back aqual to that sluggish ould haystack."—Then, aloud: "'Tisn't meself that likes to tell yez quite how it came about. Ye see we had a bit of a misfortune—But yez have such a hape of bhoys there forrard listenin', that I hardly like to sphake."

"Never mind them," bawled back the bottle-nosed skipper, in more amicable tones. "They're honest lads all when it comes to bearin' a hand to a fellow-crittur in disthress. But tell me, what is't ye've done?"

"It's the whole of the King's army, an' the half of his navy, we have afther us," quoth O'Neill, with many mysterious signs. "There's been a big battle fought in the North—by Inverness—an' his honour here was one of the Prince's right hand men."

"Ach, why didn't yez say so before? an' here's me, wud an ownly brother that carried a pike for him, just dyin' for the news. Just mind yourself, while I heave the snow to, an' then come aboard as fast as yez like."

O'Neill put up his helm, jibed, ran away for a cable's length, and then hove to, with his staysail-sheet a-weather.

The snow came far more slowly head to wind, clewing up her courses as she did so; but finally, after much splashing and wallowing and bustle, she was brought up stationary under a backed maintopsail. Four minutes afterwards saw the cutter alongside, her crew on the snow's deck, and their craft passed away astern at the end of a stout warp.

The bottle-nosed master welcomed them with effusion, and marched the three of them off to his cabin, which was entered by a low, narrow door in the break of the poop. It was an evil-smelling little den, and warmth was evidently more aimed at than ventilation. A broad locker ran along the sides, and a fixed oak table was in the middle. All seated themselves, and the host produced a demijohn of delf, and four tin mugs. "That's good honest potheen," he said, "and there's a pitcher of water on the flure for anybody that likes to mix. An' now for the yarn, av yez plaze; for it's just dyin' I am to hear what's befallen."

The story of the Prince's march northwards from Cheshire was told with all amplitude of details; and though neither Sneyd nor O'Neill knew that doughty pikeman the skipper's brother, and so could give no tidings of his probable welfare, their worthy host seemed in nowise disturbed.

"Andy Muldoon's all right, yer honour, we may lay to that. He'd be as bad to kill as an eel. Yez might cut him in two and flay the hide off him, but the bits 'ud be as lively as ever. Yer honour's shyin' at the whiskey and drownin' yer dhrink wid wather. Be advised by an ould sayman an' take it 'nate, an' sorra spasm'll yez ever have in the stomach after."

Apparently Mr. Pat Muldoon had been following his own prescription, if a nose is any measure of one's potations. But Sneyd declined to try it.

"You forget I'm English," said he, "and we in our country are not great drinkers of strong waters. Beer is our national beverage, and we stick to it for the most part; drink some foreign wines, but not so much; and scarcely ever touch usquebaugh, or, what you Irish and Scots swear by, whisky."

"Well, yer honour, every man to his own dhrink, but may the saints be good to the bhoy that first made whisky. An' that's a toast that no Fermanagh man, let alone one from County Watherford, would refuse." He and O'Neill emptied their mugs, and then he continued, "It's sorry I am, yer honour, that I'm not headin' to the s'uthard, or 'tis the proud man I'd be to take yez aboard the ould *Biddy*. But that's a nate little craft yez have astern, an' a good say-boat too, I'll take me davy; an' it's to Brest she'll be takin' yez before ye might get turned round and see where yez are."

"Arrah now, Patsey Muldoon, don't be afther blarneying us. It's yerself that knows we'll have the devil's own work to keep her goin' av it comes on to blow, or gets at all thick. How did yez suppose we could steer a straight line? Shoot a pisthol-shot over the bows and follow the shmoke?"

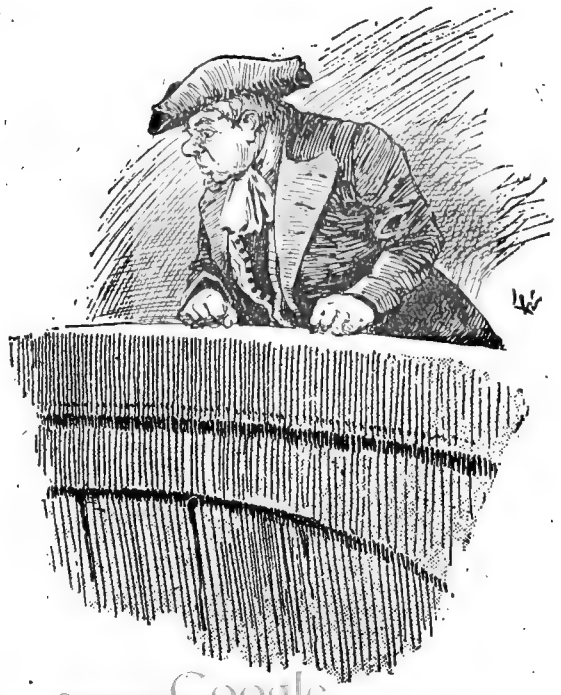
"Begob, I forgot," exclaimed the bottle-nosed man. "Yez haven't a compass aboard. There's a little gem in the locker there under the gorsoon. Get up, Sandy, me honey, lift the lid an' hand me out the wee oak box. That's it. There we are. There's a compass for a say-way now. Give it a jolt up occasionally, and it'll not vary a couple of points. On deck there, Tommy!"

"Sor?" said he of the red nightcap, lifting the skylight, and presenting an extremely dirty face.

"Get one of our wee lanthorns, an' a flask o' oil."

"Lanthorn an' oil it is, sor," said Tommy, disappearing.

"Now, that's well so far," continued the skipper; "but to a chart I can't help yez. Haven't one aboard o' me—couldn't use it if I had. Don't believe in charts meself.



The red-faced man . . . leant over the taffrail.

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Gimme log-ship and lead-line; and, wud them an' me compass, I'd find me way anywhere I been before."

"So'd I, dacent man, for that matter," rejoined O'Neill, "but never having been to any of the French ports in me life, I can't quite tell how they lie. An' just knowing the names don't help one."

"Thrue for yez, thrue for yez," replied Muldoon, rubbing his great nose perplexedly. "Yez could find yer way down to Land's End aisy enough by keepin' wudin shmell o' the land, and by aid o' a few thriflin' sailin' directions that I'll be givin' yez presently: but 'tis a good step across from there to Brest. However, I can give yez bearings, an' distances, an' tell yez what yer landfalls ought to be like. But, first of all, have yez a good memory?"

"Me memory houlds things," said O'Neill, "just like a basket houlds wather."

"That's bad," replied the skipper. "Well, I must repate an' repate till yez have it all be heart."

"Stay a moment," interrupted Sneyd. "Have you any writing materials on board? If we had the instructions down in black and white, there would be no chance of forgetting them."

"There's an inkhorn," replied the bottle-nosed man thoughtfully, "an' there's a goose-quill or two, I know; but whether there's a scrap of paper, that I can't say. —On deck there! Tommy!"

"Sor?" said Tommy, putting dirty face and red nightcap to the open skylight.

"Get me some writing-paper, quick."

"Writing-paper it is, sor," replied Tommy, withdrawing his head. Two minutes afterwards he knocked at the cabin door and coming in said, "Writing-paper, sor," clapped half-a-dozen odd scraps of not over-clean paper on to the table, and retired. Muldoon had produced a dusty inkhorn and quills, and Sneyd quickly fashioned one of the latter into a pen, and stood ready to take notes. The bottle-nosed man's information was astonishingly complete and accurate. He gave landmarks, told of rocks, shoals, and races, and related every item that could possibly be of use along the course to Brest. But as retailing these would be remarkably like giving a lengthy—a very lengthy—quotation out of a modern pilot-book, with just a few details such as those of lights and buoys omitted, I shall forbear.

The instructions took fully three hours, and, at their conclusion, Muldoon hailed again, "On deck there! Tommy!"

"Sor?" said he of the dirty face and nightcap, appearing as usual.

"Biled junk an' spuds, and look lively."

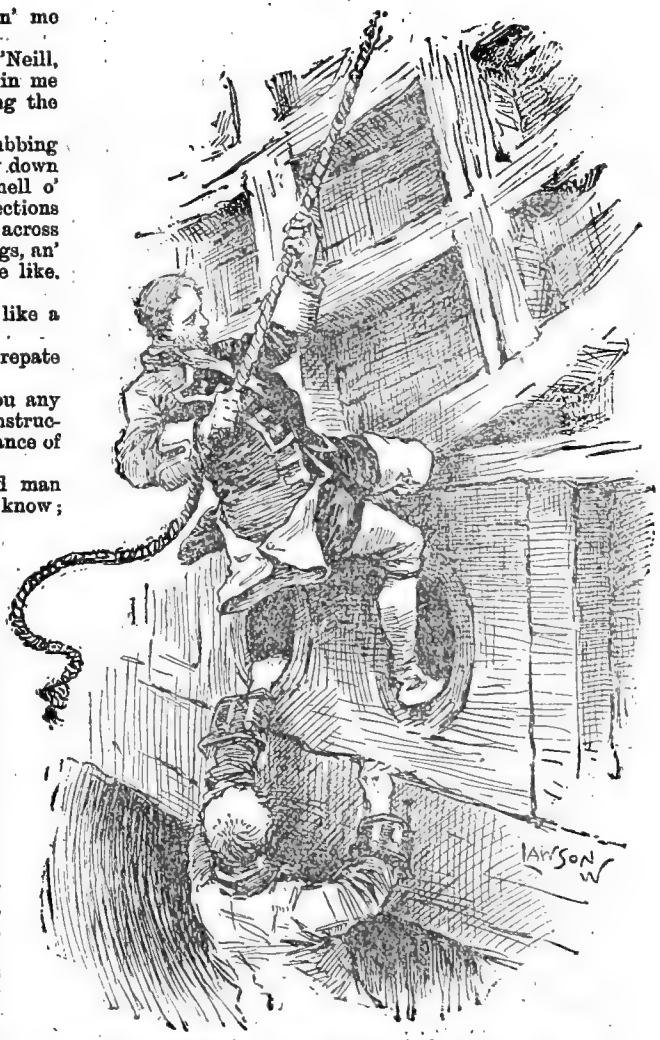
"Junk an' spuds it is, sor," replied Tommy, shutting down the skylight, and going his ways, to arrive ten minutes afterwards with two steaming tin dishes. Wooden platters were produced from a locker; each used his own knife; and forks there were none. But the viands did not stay long untouched. Healthy sea-appetites do not need much coaxing.

At its conclusion, they drank a parting cup, and went on deck. Sneyd, as delicately as he could, offered payment for the compass, but as it was refused indignantly, he was tactful enough not to press the matter further, but gave a couple of guineas from his slender store to be shared amongst the crew. Then they hauled their little cutter alongside, boarded her, and shoved off. The two craft parted, exchanging cheers, and in a couple of hours' time had lost sight of one another for ever.

But that's the way at sea.

* * * * *

The little cutter held on her course a point or two east of south, intending to make Holyhead her first landfall, after which she was to hit off the northern cape of Cardigan Bay, and then bear across to St. David's Head at its southern extremity.



Each had clutched at some portion of the stranger's gear.

The crew was divided into two watches. O'Neill took one by himself, whilst Sneyd and the boy managed during the other. Sandy was a good steersman, but he was deficient in strength; and Sneyd, whose nautical knowledge was still in its embryonic state—though growing apace—was always ready when there was any heavy work to be done. In practice, he generally took the watch by himself, for Sandy was ship's cook, being accustomed to the limited appliances, and able to make the most of them. Of course, in heavy weather Sneyd and O'Neill stayed above the whole time; and as they invariably turned in "all standing," the one whose watch it was below was ready to present himself for duty at the first call.

As it turned out, the weather favoured them on the whole. There was one short, sharp gale, which they ran before under the tiny square sail; but the cutter shipped no green water, and the spray that boarded her was easily baled back again to its proper place.

This bit of a blow brought them abreast of St. David's Head by the time it moderated, and although a tidy sea was running, they were able to give her a single-reefed mainsail almost directly afterwards.

Wind soon dropped, and headed them, blowing from the

W.S.W.; and it bade fair to be a dead ratch, up to Land's End. But provisions and water were holding out well, and they stood sturdily on, fearing nothing. Once again they saw a King's cruiser; but, as before, she ignored them. She would very likely have overhauled a more pretentious craft; but she evidently thought that no Jacobite, worthy of the catching would deign to escape in such an unkempt-looking, half-open boat as theirs was.

One day, just before nightfall, they sighted land—it turned out to be Lundy Island; but that they did not know till afterwards, and as the weather came on thick with the darkness, they deemed it wisest to heave-to till it should clear again. Accordingly the mainsail was close reefed, and the sheet hauled amidships; the staysail-sheet put a-weather; and with the helm lashed as she liked it, the little craft lay head to the seas, riding over them like a duck.

Sandy took the first watch; O'Neill followed him for the next four hours, and went below without seeing any signs of the weather improving; and then Sneyd came out of the snug little forepeak, and scrambled aft to face the driving rain in his turn.

The night was so pitchy dark that it was impossible from where he sat to see beyond the mast. The hiss of the seas, as they ran along the clincher sides, sounded monotonously in his ears. The rain drove ceaselessly into his face. Sneyd wrapped himself closely in his military cloak, and wedged himself firmly into an angle. It was an unpleasant night, but he might as well take it philosophically. There was no particular danger to be apprehended. The cutter was not likely to broach-to, for it was not blowing at all hard, and the gear had been tested by much heavier weather.

Hour by hour his watch wore on; and, as the last of it passed away, he thought the night, if anything, grew clearer. The rain was certainly not so heavy as it had been, and overhead the sky was far less murky. With luck, he thought, they'd have a fine day on the morrow. He had just arrived at this idea, and had stood up to stretch himself—for keeping in one attitude had made him feel rather cramped—when a restlessness seized him which he could not account for. He peered eagerly into the darkness on all sides, but could distinguish nothing save the dim shapes of the rolling waves. He listened attentively, but could hear no sound except the incessant swishing of the seas, the occasional groan of a timber, or the ceaseless squeak of the blocks.

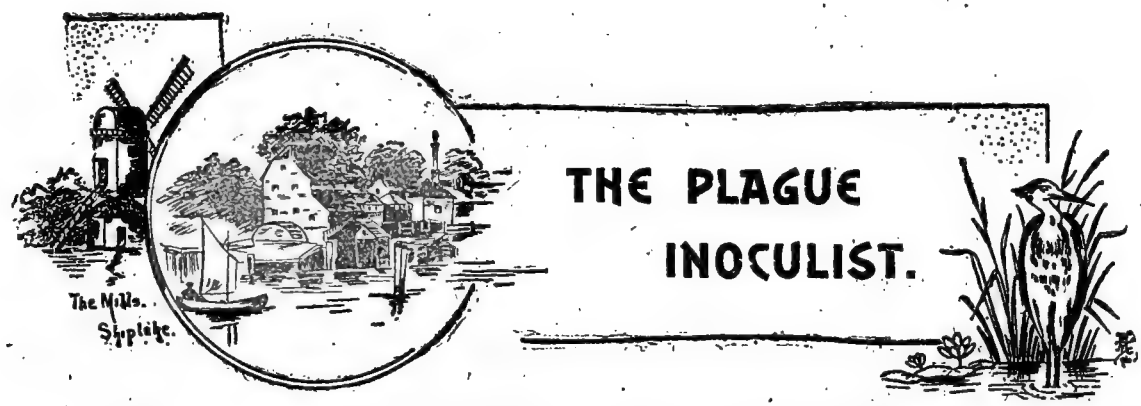
Then of a sudden a great shape loomed through the mist on the cutter's starboard beam, towering like some huge black phantom away on all sides into the darkness, and churning over the waves directly towards her.

Sneyd yelled like one possessed. "Up with your helm! Hard-a-larboard, for Heaven's sake!" and then rushed forward to call his companions on deck. They had awakened at the first alarm, and were coming through the hatch as he met them; first Sandy, then O'Neill.

"There's a big ship close aboard of us," exclaimed Sneyd, and, before the words were fairly out of his lips, the great solid beak which projected from the bows of the stranger rose to the lift of a sea, and crashed down on the little cutter just abaft 'midships, tearing through her slender fabric as though it had been so much paper.

No man could help his neighbour. It was *sauve qui peut*, and that in an instant of time. Directly she was struck, the cutter seemed to crumble into staves beneath their feet. Each had clutched at some portion of the stranger's gear, and found himself saved without knowing the fate of his comrades; and it was not till all three had been hauled up on deck by some sailors, who had run forward with ropes at the first alarm, that they thoroughly realised how they had got there.

(To be continued.)



"ONE hundred and ninety three have kicked the bucket," reported Harry O'Neil popping his head in at the open door.

"Won't you come in, man?"

"Thanks, Major, I think not! Might give you the plague." The Irish doctor's eyes twinkled merrily "One hundred and ninety three, remember."

"I'm not likely to forget it, O'Neil, any more than I am likely to forget Bombay. Confounded hole that it is!" cried Major Dothrington with a groan.

O'Neil having given his report, *vivâ voce*, proceeded to whistle blithely as he sauntered down the passage. He was an army medico, detailed on special service in the town to aid the Bombay doctors in their efforts to cope with the dread disease.

O'Neil had just left the bungalow when he was met by Harold Vermont, a doctor of exceptional skill, who practised but for love of his science.

"Ah, you, O'Neil! I thought I should find you here." He reined in his horse. "You're the very fellow I want to see. Can you spare me a moment?"

"Ten, if you like. I'm going to the town, will you accompany me?" inquired the Irishman, mounting his horse and dismissing the native who held it.

"Sorry, but I must see the Major. I'll go a little way along the road with you, though."

Vermont paused, then as the horses entered the Bombay road, said:

"O'Neil, I'm going to ask you a straight question. Will you give me a straight answer?"

"I never beat about the bush, Vermont," replied the Irishman with a smile.

Vermont hesitated, then said:

"What's your idea of the plague?"

"That it is exceptionally bad."

"You have no other idea regarding it?" Vermont glanced scrutinisingly at his companion.

"None."

"What is your idea as to its origin?"

"The native's innate love of dirt and the bad sanitation of the native quarter."

"That's just where you and all the other fellows have gone wrong."

"How?" O'Neil asked curiously.

"Have you ever paid particular attention to your patients' arms?" inquired Vermont.

"No, I can't say that I have. But what has this to do with the origin of the plague?"

"A good deal, only you don't know it," replied Vermont coolly. "Since this scourge commenced I have treated four hundred of its victims. On the right arm of two hundred and seventeen, slightly to the right of the triceps. I have observed a pustule, and on eighty others I have noticed it slightly above the deltoid."

"Well?" remarked O'Neil with a smile. "So far I see nothing remarkable."

"Wait a moment before going off at a tangent," exclaimed Vermont. "It struck me as odd that one particular pustule should always be met with in one particular spot, and that the patient possessing such a pustule would never suffer so acutely as those who did not. Therefore I minutely examined the mystifying spot on one patient. It was then that I was able to discover the origin of this outbreak. Not only one patient did I examine after that, O'Neil, but everyone who had a pustule situated as I tell you, and everyone bore out the truth of my conclusion."

O'Neil reined in his horse, a flush of interest suffusing his sunburnt cheeks.

"What was your conclusion" he cried almost peremptorily.

"That each pustule covered a scar which could be caused by nothing but a hypodermic syringe."

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated O'Neil, horror-struck. "Then the origin of the plague——"

"Was by the inoculation of sundry persons with the plague lymph."

The Irishman held out his hand.

"Vermont," he exclaimed, "you are a young man, and I an old one. You are a doctor because medicine is your hobby; I am one so as to be able to make both ends meet. You have made a discovery which I never dreamt of, and I congratulate you on it. Vermont, you are a clever fellow."

"It was luck and a little observation," replied Vermont modestly, grasping the outstretched hand. "Having now expounded to you the cause of the appearance of the plague, I will advance my theory as to how it was propagated. Of late—by that I mean within the last eighteen months—there has been great unrest among the natives, trees have been smeared white as in the days preceding the Mutiny, a spirit of coming evil has oppressed most of us, and, lastly, the fakirs have been active. This plague, O'Neil, in my mind, has been originated by a fanatic."

"It is a very likely hypothesis," replied the Irishman. "Well?"

"That is all. I'd like to see you this evening, to chat over this affair. I have to see the Major and it's late now. Come to dinner, will you?"

"Thanks, I will," replied O'Neil genially. Then added admiringly, as he watched Vermont canter away in the direction of the Major's bungalow: "That fellow has a future before him—if only he went in for medicine professionally."

True to his promise, the Irish doctor arrived at Vermont's bungalow at six, in time for dinner, but the young Englishman had not returned all day; therefore, O'Neil decided to await his return on the verandah.

The time passed slowly, till midnight boomed out from the city.

Seriously alarmed, the doctor rode through the silent streets to headquarters, inquiring after Vermont. They had not seen him since ten in the morning, when he had left to go to Major Dothrington's.

With a vague foreboding of evil O'Neil retraced his way to Vermont's bungalow, had a horse saddled and, accompanied by a native servant, clattered along the road to the Major's.

The young doctor had not been seen there since the afternoon. He had had tiffin and left somewhat about three, riding in the direction of the Western Ghauts.

With a heavy heart O'Neil turned his horse's head in this new direction and galloped along the road accompanied by the Major and Vermont's man.

The trail was easy to follow, as most of the villagers and hut-dwellers had seen him pass.

Meanwhile, Harold Vermont, after leaving the Major, had blissfully forgotten the invitation he had given O'Neil, and, forgetting, had ridden towards the Western Ghauts and stopped in front of one of the grotto-like caves which riddled the mountain side.

It was about seven when he reached his destination. Dismounting, he put his arm through the reins and whistled softly.

A beautiful young girl of some twenty summers appeared in answer to the call, and with a glad cry flung herself into his arms.

"Verda! My darling!" he cried rapturously, kissing her passionately. "It seems a year since I saw you last, though it was only yesterday."

"And to me it seems as if I had lived a lifetime," she replied. "You are late, my love—"

"Ah! Only an hour and that was not by my fault! I was speaking to the Major Sahib of the best way in which to quell this scourge."

She twined her arms around his neck and raised her soft eyes to his.

"I feared some ill had befallen you, or——" She hesitated a moment, then continued: "Or that some beautiful mem-sahib had charmed you. Oh, Harold—the women of your nation are so beautiful!"

"Do you think so?" he cried gaily. "For me, however, there is but one beautiful woman in the universe—and her name is Verda of the Ghauts."

"Oh, Harold, if I were to lose your love!" she cried impulsively; then added: "My father has arrived at last."

"Ah, this is good news; is it not, my love?" exclaimed Harold. "A fakir of some note, is he not?"

"Of some note?" She glanced questioningly at Vermont; then added almost reverently: "In India he is known as the Fakir of Fakirs."

"You must present me to your father. I am eager to see him!"

Leading him into the cavern, she halted before a low-burning fire, on the further side of which, dimly outlined

in the surrounding gloom, sat a tall, gaunt Hindoo, asceticism stamped on every feature.

"My father," said Verda gently, "behold the Englishman I have already spoken about."

The gaunt native sprang to his feet and earnestly scanned the features of the stranger. Apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he drew a deep breath, then exclaimed:

"So *you* are the Feringhee whom my daughter loves! I know your face as belonging to the man who has done much to stay the ravages of the plague at Bombay. Your skill is great in medicine—yet it is useless to pit it against the Divine will. Verda, leave us alone. I have much to say to this Englishman, and he, I doubt not, desires to speak privately to me."

Verda glanced questioningly at her lover.

"Your father is correct," he replied gently, "Go, Verda, and wait for me outside till I can come to claim you."

Without a word she obeyed, leaving together the two men of so widely different races.

"Sit down, Feringhee," commanded the Fakir, setting the example. "I heard in Bombay to-day that you have solved the cause of the outbreak of this scourge. What is it?"

"I see no reason why I should hide it! I attribute this plague primarily to inoculation."

The Fakir started, his eyes glittering.

"Ah! A good hypothesis, perhaps!" he muttered. "Tell me, Feringhee, having in your own mind solved an important problem, what will be your next step?"

The Fakir's eyes gleamed wildly beneath his shaggy eyebrows.

"I shall proceed to run the inoculist to earth."

"Ah!" The Fakir passed his hand over his shaven crown.

"A worthy resolve, but hard of accomplishment! But to change the topic; Stranger, you, I believe, love my daughter Verda?"

"Passionately!" exclaimed Vermont impulsively.

The Fakir laughed sardonically.

"Of course," he remarked stridently. "We all love passionately before marriage—and hate afterwards."

"Perhaps you were unfortunate in that respect."

"I?" The Fakir rose. "My wife died thirteen months after I married her; I had not time to hate. You desire to marry Verda?"

"You have guessed my heart's desire."

"Then know that I refuse——"

"I don't care if you do!" cried Vermont angrily. "By Heaven, I don't! Neither you nor anyone else shall separate us, for we will marry with or without your consent!"

The Fakir listened with an amused smile to the young Englishman's outburst.

"You lack courtesy," he remarked coldly. "I had not finished my sentence. With your permission I will repeat it. I refuse to permit you to marry her unless you promise to renounce your scheme of running this inoculist to earth."

"I can promise that, for I can tell others his name and leave to them the honour of tracking him!"

"You know his name? What is it?"

"Rahajat the Fakir,"

The Hindoo staggered, and placed his hand in his dress.

"Are you ill?" asked Vermont in an anxious tone.

"No! No! It is only a heart spasm. I am better now." The Fakir laughed discordantly. "Feringhee, you are a clever man, and, unlike your brother Englishmen, are correct."

"How do you know that the Fakir is the inoculist?" queried Vermont, surprised.

"Because I am Rahajat the Fakir!" shouted the other, springing at the astounded Vermont with a hypodermic syringe in his hand. "Your discovery is too weighty a one to be entrusted to such an addlepate as you!".

The young doctor's surprise was but momentary, for, realising the peril he ran of being inoculated, he seized the Fakir's wrists and called all his strength into play.

Inch by inch Vermont pressed the Fakir's hand towards his own breast, and despite the lithe Hindoo's frenzied resistance, pressed till the needle of the syringe penetrated the dusky skin.

With a scream of fear the Fakir felt the puncture, thrice repeated, then Vermont, releasing Rahajat suddenly, struck him a violent blow between the eyes which felled him, stunned and bleeding, to the ground.

Striking a match he surveyed the prostrate Fakir with a smile of satisfaction.

"The virus has begun to take effect!" Vermont remarked grimly. "I can see that by the punctures. The lymph is strangely virulent, so much so indeed that two hours will see him out of his misery."

He approached the cavern mouth, leaving the darkness behind him, to find Verda waiting for him.

"You are mine for ever, darling!" he cried joyfully. "We must escape. Your father is stricken with the plague."

"Then my duty is to nurse him."

For sole answer, Vermont mounted his horse, and, seizing Verda, placed her before him on the saddle and galloped away, to fall in with Major Dothrington and Doctor O'Neil four hours later.

Calling them on one side he briefly explained what had occurred.

"By Jove, man, you deserve a medal!" exclaimed the cheery Major enthusiastically. Then his face clouded. "But you won't get a thing, I suppose, for the Government daren't take any notice of this affair. I should cut India, if I were you, for once the natives get wind that you inoculated Rahajat, their most sacred of sacred Fakirs—well——"

"I don't want any more reward than what I have already!"

"What's that—the girl?"

"Yes, Major—my future wife."

The following day the great plague's register showed a decrease of fifty victims.

TRISTAM MONCK.

"WHY does that man keep watching me all the time?"

"Perhaps it's because he wonders why you're staring at him!"

BEAUTIFUL MAIDEN: "I have here a little poem: the only one I ever wrote."

Over-Sensitive Editor: "Then, my dear madam, I haven't the heart to take it from you."

QUIZZEL: "What will you give your girl on New Year's Day?"

Sharpleigh: "Well, that depends. If she says 'Yes,' New Year's Eve, I shall give her a seal-skin sacque; if she says 'No,' I suppose I shall have to let her give me the sack."

A DINNER-TABLE DAYDREAM.

We were a large, jolly party, who had now been staying at the country house of my old friend, Charlie Whistler, for three days. I need not tell you who we all were; suffice it to say that I am Jack Tatham, and that my interest in this visit was centred in one of the other guests—Miss Vera Majoribanks.

Our hostess had the tact and good-natured consideration of her friends' wishes to send the object of my interest down to dinner under my especial care; and it can easily be imagined that, such being the case, all arrangements for our entertainment during the next two hours seemed perfect to me. The lighting of the table more especially so, since it all appeared to proceed from the brilliant light in my fair neighbour's blue eyes, and to be reflected in the exquisite diamonds on her snowy neck and arms.

Our conversation had gone on during three courses with no more interruption than the occasional attentions to the rest of the party which courtesy demands; when I became aware that Miss Majoribanks was no longer listening to me—or, indeed to anybody or anything. Her eyes were fixed with an expression of terror on the face of a servant, who was handing a plate to an old lady exactly opposite. There was nothing in the man's appearance to cause such fear as her face and even her attitude expressed. He was a pale-faced, morose looking man, with straight black hair, and small eyes. I did not remember having seen him on my last visit, six months ago, so concluded he was a servant who had not been there long. These thoughts did not occupy a moment, and the next I bent over Miss Majoribanks and asked:

"Are you cold—or perhaps not well? You look so pale and wretched."

She started, and turned to me as if just awaking from a dream, and answered:

"Yes, I am cold, I was shivering at thoughts which came into my head when I saw that man opposite to us."

"It was so exact," she continued. "Just the same small gleaming eyes, the same black hair, only—I thought it was covered by a woman's cap. Ah! is it a dream, or how do I know it all?"

I thought she was a little upset; though why, I knew not, and so I tried to calm her, and told her that dreams always went by contraries—for instance, that to dream of a death meant an approaching marriage. I tried to say this meaningly as well as encouragingly.

When she was more collected I pointed out to her that fewer servants were in the room now; her particular horror being one of the absentees.

"You must think me very silly," she said, blushing. "But I still feel that I have seen that man before, and I must tell you all about it when we can talk quietly."

Soon after this the ladies left us, and it was some time later that we found ourselves settled in a shaded corner of the drawing-room for a quiet talk. I began by saying:—

"Now for the mystery! and I hope we shall be able to clear it up satisfactorily."

"I wish you could put it all out of my head," she said dreamily. "I know I shall never dare to go to bed to-night."

Then she began in hurried, excited tones to tell me what her impressions had been.

"I will tell you all I saw as soon as I caught that man's eyes," she said. "They seemed to me to be fixed on my diamonds, the man's face was bent over me with a greedy gleam in those small black eyes, while an awful, sharp, cruel knife was in his hand. Such a thing has never been told to me; oh, must it not mean that it is going to happen? Don't you think that dreams are sometimes sent as warnings?"

"But you do not know that you ever dreamt it," I said. "I think you must have read something of the kind, and you have allowed it to prey on your imagination."

"No, it is all connected with my diamonds; I saw the man's eyes attracted by them when we were at dinner, and it was that which led to the dream, or vision, or whatever it may be."

An idea occurred to me.

"Will you leave the diamonds in my care when you are not wearing them?" I said. "Then, if, as you say, the man's face and all its horrors are distinctly connected with them, he will trouble me, and you need not think of him any more. But wear them now until bed-time, so as to avoid drawing attention to what might have to be explained; and how could you explain all these vague doubts and suspicions, which to-morrow you will remember only as empty fancies?"

Then I added—

"If you are at all nervous I will sit up all night in the library, the side door of which is exactly opposite to the one door of the room you occupy. I can easily make an excuse for going there when the household settles for

the night, and I promise you to remain there with that door open until morning."

Of course Miss Majoribanks replied with many thanks, that she would feel quite safe under such circumstances, but could not think of robbing me of my rest because of her foolish fancies. To which I responded by assuring her that the thought of her anxiety alone would be sufficient to keep me awake in any case—which argument was conclusive.

When bed-time arrived I gave her her candle, and she quietly put the diamonds into my hand: then said good-night with a shy, grateful look, which it is pleasant to remember.

We men-folks were not fond of late hours; and on this particular night we seemed more sleepily inclined than usual. So I was soon able to carry out my programme, saying I had some writing to do before the early post, and should probably burn the midnight oil in the library.

There I carried my rugs; and, having carefully turned down and shaded the lamp, I settled myself in an arm-chair near the door, but in such a position as not to be easily seen through it.

I imagine that I must have been sitting there about two hours, when I heard a soft step approaching from the hall. It came as far as the door opposite—and there stopped.

The lights were kept burning all night in the corridors, so I was able to distinguish the figure of one of the housemaids, as I supposed, taking coals to Miss Majoribanks's room. But why should coals be needed at 2 a.m.? I knew how startled Miss Majoribanks would be by her entrance. Putting up the lamp while the servant's back was turned to me, and she intent upon opening the door quietly, I went into the corridor, and said:—

"Thank you, it was I who wanted the coals in the library. Bring them in, please."

The maid looked startled, as she well might, and did not seem as if she understood me; so I repeated:—

"In here, please," pointing to the library door. She then brought them in, rather sullenly I thought, and was going to put some on the fire, when I stopped her saying:—

"Leave the box there, please, and I will put them on as I need them."

There was nothing more to be said, and she withdrew, but not before I had noticed that her eyes were singularly like those of the man-servant who had caused such alarm; that her cap did not appear to sit on her head as a woman's cap should; and that her clothes did not look as if they were made for her square, masculine figure.

After thinking over this, something prompted me to examine the coal-scuttle which she had brought in; and there to my horror, if not to my surprise—under two or three of the larger coals was a knife, "awful, sharp, cruel!" as it had been described to me. Need I say how thankful I then was that I had prevented the coals being taken into the room for which they were intended.

The next morning I heard that one of the men-servants had obtained leave of absence that he might go to see his wife, the news of whose serious illness he had just received. He was gone before we were down, and I knew well how to interpret this, but determined to say nothing, and have since learnt—as I expected—that for some reason or other he never returned.

Miss Majoribanks now thinks that her fears were without the slightest foundation, and I try to appear as if I thought so too.

G. FENTON.

£50 OFFERED EVERY WEEK. £50

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses 50 envelopes to 50 people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD

and address it to the Editor under the following conditions: Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 14 distribution must reach us by January 9th, addressed to The 14th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of Distribution No. II.

Two of the fifty people selected to receive a sovereign this week have applied for it. They are:

Miss R. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

R. Groves, 3 Market Place, Waltham Abbey, Essex.

The unclaimed sovereigns were addressed to:

James Dixon, Hebburn Villa, Hebburn-on-Tyne; Mrs. Dalton, Palace Road, Ripon; Miss Anthony, 19 Caloy Place, Otley, Leeds; J. Cartwright, 13 Toon Street, Buxton; W. Griffiths, Wharf Street, Ellesmere, Shropshire; W. Phillips, 5 East Cross Street, Sunderland; J. H. Porter, Army Ordnance Corps, Ordnance Office, Harwich; R. Pugh, 14 King Street, Oswestry; E. Peake, 8 Bond Street, Swansea; C. Croeskill, 7 Oxford Street, Wellingborough; Miss Morice, 17 Edith Road, West Kensington; J. E. Hehir, 149 Upper Lewes Road, Brighton; F. Roberts, 8 Crickerfield Road, Clapton, N.E.; J. K. Engall, 1 Springfield Lodge, Springfield Road, Guildford; E. Beach, 3 Newchapel Road, Perry Hill, Catford; E. Jay, 12 Clwyd Street, New Brighton, Cheshire; W. J. Nagle, 17 North Street, Skibbereen, Ireland; S. Vincent, 19 Parthenia Road, Fulham, S.W.; A. Harris, 5 Frederick Street, Martin Street, Stratford; George Amos, Dovesford, Jedburgh, N.B.; J. Easton, 7 Bath Terrace, Blyth, Northumberland; A. B. Thomas, 1 Eaton Place, Llandaff; A. Smith, 51 Borton Road, Chorley, Lancs.; Mrs. Gear, 8 Woodstock Terrace, Ilfracombe; Miss Deane, Garden Cottage, Fingest, Henley-on-Thames; Charles Ibbot, Goldington, Bedford; Mrs. Cameron, Cairngower, Crieff, N.B.; T. Sale, 14 West Street, Hackney, N.E.; Charles Young, Rollesby, Yarmouth; John Mower, Little Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk; George Douglas, 174 High Street, Margate; W. Treby, 51 Lawrence Road, Southsea; O. Pemberton, Myrtle Cottage, Desborough, Sussex; Miss Dodd, 8 Eaton Road, West Kirby, Cheshire; H. Neale, Railway Inn, Church Street, Bromyard, Herefordshire; W. Fevin, St. Cleers, Somerton, Somerset; John Fowler, Aston, Avonmouth, Gloucestershire; J. Wilson, Dalston Road, Commersdale, Carlisle; Mrs. Parker, Walton Cottage, Chapel Hill, Ambleside; F. Orange, 104 Front Street, Arnold, Notts; A. Green, 38 Derby Road, Hinckley, Leicester; F. Joyce, Cromwell Place, St. Ives; W. G. Leigh, Bridge Street, Peterborough; J. Wells, 37 North Street, Hornsastle; J. Tailby, Mill Street, Sutton Coldfield; Mrs. Kemp, High Street, Pershore; Miss Faulkner, George Street, Oxford; W. Kent, Tronance Farm, Newquay, Cornwall.

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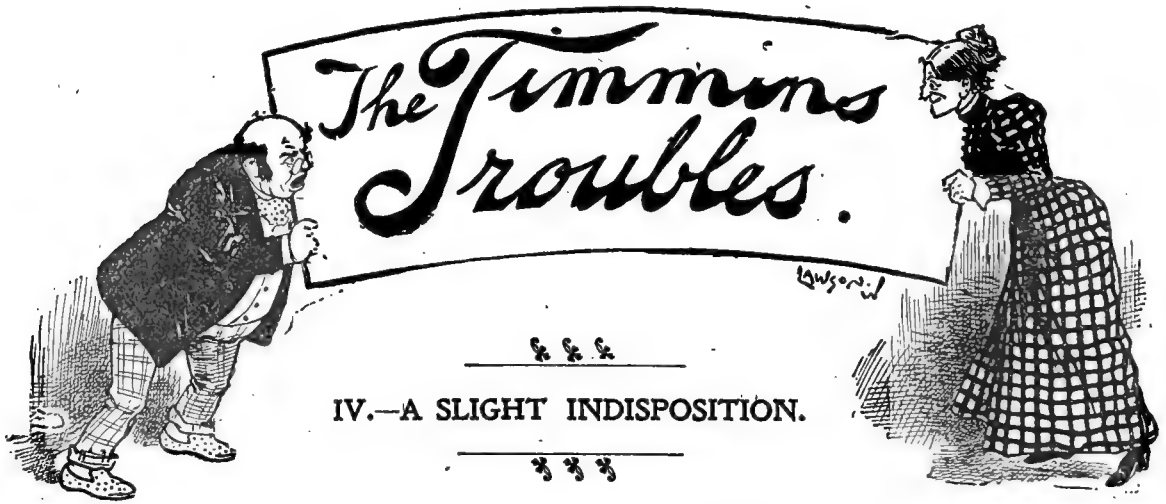


IV.—A SLIGHT INDISPOSITION.

"THAT'S better," groaned Mr. Timmins, as his wife arranged the cool pillows under his head. "Now I can die looking out upon the trees and the sky," and Mr. Timmins assumed a resigned expression of visage, and gazed out of the corner of his one eye upon a bare tree and half a dozen telegraph wires.

"Oh, you won't die," said Mrs. Timmins cheerfully. "You're only a little ill, and you'll get over it."

"That's all you know about it," snarled Mr. Timmins. "To hear you talk, one would think you only had to be fitted up with little beds and a smell of liniment to be a hospital. I'm very ill, I tell you, and I don't want any nonsense about it."

"Well, well," cooed Mrs. Timmins, "don't excite yourself. Keep quiet and you'll get well."

"Much you'd care!" muttered Mr. Timmins turning on his side and resting his cheek on his hand, an attitude generally assumed by martyred spirits on the approach of dissolution.

"Will you take your drops again, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins. "It's time for them."

"No, I won't. They're nasty. I haven't had anything but drops for a week. From the way you administer drops one would think you were the trap-door of a hanging machine. Give me some figs."

"But there are no figs, dear. I'll go and get you some," said Mrs. Timmins.

"That's it," growled her husband. "You only want an excuse to leave me to die alone. Why haven't you got some figs? You might know I'd want figs. Have you got any prunes?"

"No, I haven't any prunes, but I won't be more than a minute away, and I'll get you any fruit you want."

"Oh, yes. You'd get it, I've no doubt. What you want is a railing round you and a gate off the hinges to be an orchard. Fetch me some strawberries."

"Why, strawberries are out of season! There are none in the market."

"I supposed you'd say that," moaned Mr. Timmins. "You've always got some excuse. If I should die you'd have an apology ready. Give me something to take this taste out of my mouth."

"What would you like, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins.

"Soap, hang it all! give me soap, if you can't think of anything else," demanded Mr. Timmins. "May be you haven't got any soap. At least, you wouldn't have if I wanted it. Have you got any cherries?"

"No. They are out of season, too. There are some grapes in the cupboard."

"I don't want any grapes. If I can't have what I want I don't want it. Where are those drops? Why don't you give me my medicine? Are you going to let me die for want of a little attention? You want the life insurance, don't you?"

Mrs. Timmins ladled out the dose, half of which went down Mr. Timmins' gullet, and half over the front of his nightshirt.

"That's it," he howled. "Spill 'em. They're for external application, Put 'em anywhere. Pour 'em up the chimney," and Mr. Timmins hurled the spoon across the room.

"Have a piece of orange to take the taste away?" asked Mrs. Timmins pleasantly.

"No, I won't," objected her spouse. "Give me a piece of melon."

"I don't believe they have melons in December," sighed Mrs. Timmins.

"Of course they don't," reasoned Mr. Timmins. "They don't have anything when I'm ill. It's a wonder they have houses. It's a miracle that they have beds. I'm astounded to think they have doctors and chemists' shops. I've got to hurry up and die, or they won't have any undertakers, or coffins, or graves. Give me a piece of orange, will you? D'you suppose I'm going to lie here and live on the taste of those drops for a month?"

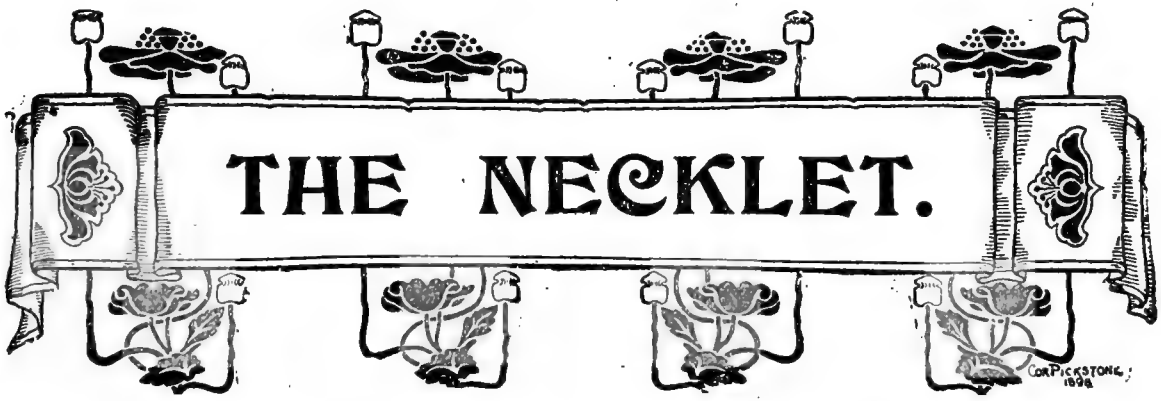
"You'd like these grapes," suggested his wife.

"No, I wouldn't either. What do you want me to eat 'em for? Have you got any interest in the grape trade? Who's paid you to make me eat them? One would think you only wanted a porch and four boys climbing over you to be a grape vine. Where's my pill?"

"You took your pill, dear," replied his patient wife.

"Oh, of course! A pill is out of season now. I can't even have a pill when I feel like it;" and Mr. Timmins groaned in spirit and looked dismal. "Now sit down and don't move. I want to sleep. Don't you make a bit of noise if you want me to live."

And Mrs. Timmins held her breath and never rustled a feather, while her husband lay and glared out of the window for an hour and a half.



"WHAT right have you to accept a present from him?"

"Right!"

The girl's eyes flashed angrily as she arose from her recumbent attitude by the side of the old fishing boat and looked haughtily down upon the young fellow who uttered the words.

She was a pretty girl of nineteen. She was not handsome, but just pretty, and she knew it. As she stood defiantly before him—for he also had risen to his feet, slowly—with her flushed face, her white teeth just visible between her rosy lips, and her well-formed figure drawn to the full of its limited height of five feet, the pang of bitterness in Dick Burrell's heart was at first subdued by his admiration and then returned with double force. Jenny Raynes, whom he loved so passionately, was slipping away from him.

"Why haven't I a right to take a present from him?" asked Jenny, in the same angry tone and with a slight toss of the head. "Who has any right to stop me?"

"I—" began Dick, but the flash of her eye warned him, and he quickly turned the words. "Everybody knows that you are keeping company with me."

"Everybody knows that *you* have been trying to make love to me," she retorted, "but I am not bound to you, and I can take any presents I like!"

"He's playing with you, Jenny," Dick said doggedly. "It stands to reason that an artist gentleman don't want you, however pretty you are. You see, Jenny, you're a lot below him, being a servant—though you are as good as any lady. He gave you that gold necklet, and he's going to paint your portrait for some——"

"I won't listen to another word!" exclaimed Jenny Raynes. "You're jealous because you can't afford to give me things—because you are only a fisherman and egg hunter and not a gentleman, like him. I can please myself!"

And with another toss of the pretty head, she turned on her heel and left him.

Dick watched her until she had disappeared; then, with a heavy heart, he wended his way towards the town in another direction. He entered an inn where he was wont to take his daily half-pint, called for the drink and buried himself in a corner of the parlour to give himself up to bitter reflections.

He loved Jenny, but she was a wayward lassie and her head was turned by flattery. He had no tongue for polite compliments such as the gentry knew how to utter, but he loved her with deep affection and would have given his life to benefit her. His mother had told him that she would not make a fitting wife for him; she was too "flighty" and would never be a steady, contented woman until she had been sobered by some great trouble, so ran his mother's opinion. But Dick could not control the dictates of his heart and he—yes, he loved her. How would it——

"Hallo, Dick! You're the very man I am looking for."

Dick started as his reverie was thus broken. He looked up slowly, like a man returning to consciousness, and beheld the well-known form of Sergeant Samuel Silkins, of the West Police.

Silkins was a character in his way, and had several peculiarities. One of these was his fondness for alliteration in names; he had three children, each of whom had three names (including the surname) and all the names began with S. The eldest was Sophia Selina, the second was Susan Sarah, and the third, a boy and the hope of his heart, was Steven Scipio. The officer had always regretted that he himself had only two names, but on attaining the rank of sergeant he had become reconciled to the deficiency, since he could make up the three S's in that way. It is scarcely necessary to add that Silkins was an important personage in the town; but it may be well to mention it, so that you may treat him with due deference when you chance to visit Dexham.

"I think you can be of service to Her Majesty's Government, Dick," continued the Sergeant, dropping into a chair. "What's the matter with you, man?" he asked, as Dick remained silent.

"Nothing in particular," replied Burrell, rousing himself. "What do you want me to do, Sergeant?"

"I want you to look a little less like a funeral, for one thing," said Silkins. "Your mug's empty! Have another—it won't hurt you, man, and I'll pay for it."

When the ale had been brought in, Silkins cautiously closed the door and spoke in a low tone.

"We have been informed," he began in an impressive manner, "that a notorious individual has slipped away from London, and is probably somewhere along the coast in this direction. We have to keep our eyes open and report if we see anyone suspicious."

He leant back in his chair and glanced at Burrell.

"Well?" queried the latter indifferently.

"Now, *I* have my suspicions about that artist chap who has been here for the last three weeks. Been paying attention to Jenny Raynes, so I'm told. (Ah! That's woke him up!) Do *you* know what he is doing here?"

"No," replied Dick, with a little more animation. "What do you want me to do?"

"*Now* you're talking sensibly," remarked Silkins. "The long and the short of it is this: we want to know what he is up to, and I thought you could keep your eye on him or *get the information from someone.*"

"She don't know any more about him than you do," said Burrell, who at once grasped the meaning of Silkins' words. "She's lost her head because a man in fine clothes has spoken to her and"—he was going to say "given her a necklet," but he stopped.

"Oh!" said Silkins in a disappointed voice. "Then you can't help me?"

"I can keep a look-out, but I can't do any more," returned Dick. "Of course, if I see anything wrong I'll tell you."

The Sergeant tried in various ways to make Burrell take a more lively interest in the matter, using the words "Her Majesty's Government," in every other sentence, but without success.

They left the inn together and Silkins, finding that Dick was not particular whither he went, artfully walked with him, chatting on other subjects and guiding him away from his home towards a quieter part of Dexham. As they walked along an idea came to Silkins, a recollection which made him say hard things to himself for not having remembered it before.

"You ought to have been a detective, Dick; you'd stand more chance with a girl like Jenny if you had a year or so in the force and worked yourself up to be a plain clothes man. It smartens a man up so, you know. But, bless me! You *did* do a little in that line about a year ago, didn't you?"

"I put the police on the track of a gang of swindlers while I was in London for a couple of months. It's about a year ago," returned Burrell.

"Put them on the track!" exclaimed Silkins, drawing on his imagination. "Why I was told—from headquarters, you know—that it was really through you that they were nabbed! It broke up the Langley gang, for they were all sent to penal servitude except one, who nearly murdered the detective and was never caught. Why, you are the very man to help me, and I can't understand why you persist in saying you won't. You'd get all the credit."

Burrell was tired of the subject. He did not know whether to be pleased or vexed. He wanted to get rid of Silkins.

"Very well," he said wearily, "I'll do my best for you, and see if I can discover this fellow's little game. Now I must be off, Sergeant."

And although Silkins tried to detain him, Burrell shook hands with the great man and left him.

The two men went their ways unconscious of the fact that the latter portion of their conversation had been overheard. Neither had noticed that a man had been crouching near them under a low shed, his concealment having been assisted by the gathering gloom. He emerged into the open and gazed at the retreating figure of Dick Burrell.

"Listeners never hear any good of themselves, they say, and it is probably true," he muttered with an evil expression on his not unattractive features, "but they often hear something that is good for them to know. It is rather lucky that I dodged down when I saw them coming. I didn't want them to see me just here, but I certainly did not think of 'hearing something to my advantage,' as the legal advertisements say. H'm, so it was you, my young fisherman, eh? Very good!"

It was two days later when Dick Burrell went on his next egg-hunting expedition. On the previous afternoon he had seen Jenny and found her less inclined than ever to listen to him; he had left her with the remark that he was going egg-hunting over the Boverhyde Cliff on the following morning, and did not care if the rope broke and dropped him on the rocks below. At which she had laughed scornfully.

Dick thought of this laugh as he hung over the high cliff, sitting in the noose of his rope. At that moment he was suspended about twelve yards down the side of the cliff, steadying himself by placing his feet against it, while with both hands he was feeling in a hole for eggs. As the thought came to him, he stopped in his work and glanced at the rocks below. He could not repress a shudder at the idea of falling that distance on the jagged points rising from the sea.

"It would be a pleasant drop, eh?"

The air was still; there was scarcely a breath of wind; and the words came distinctly to his ear.

He turned his eyes upwards to the summit and saw the artist—his rival—standing by the stout bough to which he had attached his rope. A thrill of fear passed through Burrell's frame at the expression on the man's countenance; he felt instinctively that the intruder meant mischief.

"I am glad you told Jenny that you were coming here," continued Clarke, (that was the name he had given in Dexham). "It gave me the opportunity of having a little talk with you without fear of interruption. Don't attempt to climb up," he added warningly, "or I will cut the rope."

Suiting the action to the word, he drew out a pocket knife and laid the edge of the blade against the line.

"You——"

"Tut, tut!" Clarke broke in. "You will not help yourself by calling me names. Listen to what I have to say.

"I have a big score and two small ones to pay off, Mr. Richard Burrell; and, by the Lord Harry! I'm going to wipe the slate clean! Do you hear?"

"You coward!" cried Dick scornfully. "Let me come up, and fight it out with me like a man!"

The other smiled sardonically.

"And miss the sport? No! You are in league with that thick-headed policeman to spoil my game here; that is little score No. 1. You are trying to make Jenny throw me over; that's No. 2. Pretty girl isn't she? Sorry to disappoint you, but I require the little fool's assistance for the job I have on hand. But the big score is the one I am most anxious to pay off. So it was *you* who gave us away in London? I was one of the 'Langley gang,' and I had to nearly kill a man to escape. I swore that I would have revenge if I ever met you again. I can't imagine how it was that I didn't recognise you. But your appearance is different in those clothes, and I never heard your full name down here till two days ago."

Clarke tried the edge of the knife-blade on his thumb and continued:

"I am not of a forgiving disposition. I am going to send you to—well, I don't trouble much about such matters, so I'll leave you to imagine to which place you will go. But I intend to have a little sport.

"This rope has five strands apparently. I shall cut one strand at a time. You have about five minutes to pray before you go down below on the rocks. I must say that they do not look very tempting, but we cannot

always pick and choose. I was obliged to take my lot as it came to me through you; the tables are now turned."

"I did my duty as it was shown to me by accident," replied Dick. He was pale, but he spoke quietly and evinced no sign of fear. If his last minutes had come, he would meet his death bravely, however terrible it might be. "Was it my fault that you were one of the evil-doers? I knew nothing of you."

"You know something about me now," said Clarke. "I owe it to you that I have to hide from justice, and now you are on my track again. I am on a job that will make me for life, and I don't intend to be foiled. It's very little I'll stop at; especially when I can have revenge at the same time! But we have wasted enough time; there goes one strand, so make a beginning with your prayers."

As he spoke the villain deliberately cut through one strand of the line upon which Dick's life depended.

Without moving his head, Dick turned his eyes along the face of the cliff in a vain endeavour to find some chance of escape. The ledge or hole in which he had been feeling was the only place to which he could clutch, but of what avail would that be? He could not hang there for more than a few minutes, even if he succeeded in clutching it before Clarke prevented him; for it was nearly three feet beyond his reach, and to get his hands on it he had to work himself along sideways with his feet. He had allowed himself to swing away from it when Clarke appeared. Clarke would certainly frustrate any such attempt by cutting the rope through at once.

"Two!" exclaimed the murderous rascal as he again made use of his knife. "I hope you are making good use of your time."

Dick seemed to feel the strand go, and a pang went through his heart. Was there no escape? Must he die like this? Again his eyes wandered over the face of the cliff, only to receive confirmation of the utter helplessness of his position.

"Three! Have you any message for Jenny? I shall be pleased to deliver your last dying wish, provided it is a proper one."

"You villain!" burst from Burrell's lips. The exclamation was wrung from him by the heartlessness of his murderer and by the thought of Jenny. He would willingly have died to benefit her, but his death at this time meant the loss of the only one who would take any interest in her well-being.

Clarke saw the agony in the upturned face and gloated over it.

"Four!"

He was hanging now by one strand. His mind was in a whirl; he could think of nothing. He was conscious that Clarke was speaking; he could not distinguish the words, but he perceived that he was being taunted. Then he distinctly heard the word:

"Five!"

Dick Burrell shut his eyes with an agonised groan and the name of Jenny on his lips. Down, down, down! Would it never end? Would he be dashed to a shapeless mass, or would Heaven miraculously save him to defeat the villainy of that man? These thoughts flashed through his brain, he knew not how. Then it seemed to him that he was not falling, that he heard voices above.

He opened his eyes and slowly raised them. Yes, he was still suspended by the rope and there were voices above. Some struggle was taking place. If he could climb the rope! Would it bear the strain?

In the meantime, what had occurred at the top of the cliff?

Jenny, impelled by some feeling which she could not define, had contrived to slip out and had made her way to the Boverhyde Cliff to see Dick. As she approached the spot where she expected to find her lover, she was surprised to see the form of Clarke bending over the cliff, supporting himself by clasping the bough with his left arm. Not suspecting anything wrong, she had walked up to the spot; her light steps made scarcely any noise, and Clarke was too engrossed to notice them.

She reached him just as he cut the fourth strand. She heard his taunting remarks. She was too horrified to act at once, and stood as if chained to the ground. The word "Five!" and the gleam of the blade in the sunlight aroused her to a knowledge of the situation; with a cry of horror and indignation she sprang forward and dragged his arm back with all her strength, which was increased for the time by her desperation.

Taken by surprise, Clarke was dragged right round and stumbled. When he saw who it was, he was nonplussed for a second; then he rushed at her with an oath and they struggled together on the turf. This was the sound that met Dick's ears.

Clarke dragged her to the edge; his face was convulsed with passion, and Jenny felt he would have no mercy Nearer and nearer. In her despair she mustered strength enough to wrench her right hand free and threw it around the trunk. At that moment—she never knew how it happened—he stumbled, released her left arm in a frantic effort to save himself, and disappeared over the edge of the cliff.

Dick, looking up, saw the body rush past him and shuddered. He saw Jenny's agonised face as she bent over the edge and told him he was safe.

He began to climb up the rope, hand over hand, but he felt that it would not bear the strain. A few inches at a time he went up, his heart beating quickly, while Jenny watched him in suspense. The remaining strand was giving; it would not hold his weight long. If he sat still, he would soon be dashed to the rocks below; on the other hand he might succeed in reaching the top in time if he climbed carefully. It was an awful time of suspense, but Dick felt that he would not bear the strain long enough. He shouted to her, asking her to tie something round the rope under the cut so as to relieve the strain. He saw her look round helplessly for a second, then she hastily undid the chain from her neck, tied one end as he had suggested, and held it taut with her disengaged hand.

It was a delicate thing to look at, but it was good and strong, and it served the purpose. Dick climbed up cautiously until his hands were level with the turf, then he abandoned the rope and scrambled up with the assistance of Jenny.

Who can describe the joy of that meeting?

The affair caused a great sensation in Dexham. The excitement lasted more than the nine days, but it wore off gradually. The event was brought back to the minds of the inhabitants some weeks later by the marriage of Dick and Jenny and their departure for London, where the former had obtained a better situation.

And the necklet? Dick wanted to keep it, but, in spite of the part it had played in saving her lover, the sight of it was distasteful to Jenny. It was therefore decided to give it to some fund for the benefit of our fisher folk.

GEO. DAY.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER XLV. (*continued*).

They were now passing along the large public square in the centre of the city. The dense throng on either side their path pressed disorderly upon them and progress became slow and difficult. The intermittent growling that rumbled through the spectators reached the Tsar's ears and he spurred his horse on in anger.

At the same time the guards rode forward on either side to keep off the press, and beat the people back with their sabres. At this act of wanton cruelty a hoarse roar went up mingled with hisses and shouts of disloyalty. The spirit of the citizens, too long repressed, sought a vent, and in a moment a sullen crowd threatened to become a dangerous mob.

"Down with the Tsar!" suddenly cried someone who was standing in the front line. It was like a spark setting gunpowder ablaze. Curses and cries of hatred beset the royal ears. The people of Moscow had spoken at last.

The Tsar reined in his horse. Gourko placed his hand upon his sovereign's arm, but it was roughly shaken off.

Turning round, the Tsar beckoned towards him Pochowski, who still acted as captain of the royal guard. And this in no treacherous spirit. The Nihilist leaders feared the extremities to which fury might drive their fanatical armies. The Tsar, at least, must be safe-guarded from their violence.

Pale with rage Nicholas pointed to the clamorous bystanders.

"Captain!" he commanded. "Fire on this rabble."

Pochowski started and changed colour.

"Your Majesty——" he commenced.

"What, sir! Do you attempt to argue?" shouted the Tsar.

"But, sire," stammered the confused officer. "I dare not fire, for your Majesty's sake. Such an act would excite them to a riot. Your life would be endangered."

"You dare to disobey me?" cried Alexander. "You may consider yourself under arrest. Slivinski," he went on, turning to the officer next in command, "I place you in authority. Do my bidding."

Slivinski coloured and hesitated.

"I agree with Captain Pochowski," he faltered.

"Enough," cried the enraged sovereign. "I have no longer even a faithful bodyguard, then! Silence, sir!" he exclaimed, as he saw Slivinski was about to make some deprecatory explanation. "You have chosen your time well. Gourko, let us get on to the Palace."

So saying, the two dashed off rapidly in the direction of the Kremlim, the crowd parting to let them pass. Slowly and ashamed the Royal Guard halted, with the two disgraced officers at their head.

Within a few minutes the news of this outburst flew through the streets like wildfire, and the most violent excitement prevailed. A rush was made to the great square, and here the dense crowd swayed and seethed with the passion of turbulent fury. Moscow, runs the saying, is a kitten when it is at play, but a tiger when it is aroused. And now the great city abandoned itself to all the tempestuous fury of ungovernable revolt. There was no longer any attempt at concealment. From every nook and cranny crept forth the hunted Nihilist, the terrible minister of destruction, pest and patriot, the reformer aflame with generous purpose, and the vile assassin athirst for blood. All that was good and all that was bad blended in this surging multitude of men.

Pochowski saw it and trembled. It was becoming a tempest that he could not direct. To what terrible lengths might not this passionate community proceed, if once it abandoned itself to its fury? The revolution he aimed at might become nothing less that a new Reign of Terror, a tornado of destruction and unbridled license. It would make the patriot's deed accursed.

He flung himself among the uprearious people. He appealed to them to remain orderly.

"Men of Russia," he said passionately, "we must be united or we shall lose all. Our brothers without are completing the great plan; let us hear from them first. It becomes us to see that no stain rests upon our noble work. We get our victory twice over if we get it without bloodshed. All is well so far. Moscow is true to the cause, and it is due to her that she should set an example of dignity and self-control to the rest of the empire."

His words, heard by but a few amid the deafening roar, were little heeded. Some temperate citizens attempted to aid him in calming the passions of the constantly increasing multitude, but it was a task quite beyond their power.

"Shall we be idle whilst our brethren are at work?" cried one of the orators, who were by this time haranguing the crowds in every direction. "We have the fox safe in our power, and shall we let him escape?"

"Down with the Tsar," cried a thousand voices, as the speaker stretched out his hand to the ancient palace of the Muscovite kings, and a great roar of assent went up.

The passions of the people were inflamed to a still more violent pitch by a small body of the royal troops, who, hearing these cries of disloyalty, and fearing for their master, had issued from the Kremlin and charged into the vast crowd with the mad hope of dispersing them. With a howl of rage, the people flung themselves fiercely upon their assailants.

The latter though armed, could do nothing against this resistless torrent of humanity, who, in frightful earnestness, beset the little company of soldiers, tearing the men from their horses attacking them with every weapon that lay to their hand, and splitting them up into sundered atoms, which were entirely at the mercy of a merciless and howling multitude.

Pochowski saw these things and shuddered. The wild beast was already loose. He looked anxiously at his watch.

Already three hours had passed by, and there was no news.

But what would happen when it *did* come? Moscow was a mad dog. Success would only goad her into new violence and unutterable outrage.

He gave a few hurried directions to the soldiers in attendance on him, and dashed off to the scene of this sickening conflict. As he did so, he perceived a single horseman making off along the square, evidently in the direction of the Tverskaga Zastava.

"A royal messenger!" he exclaimed. "The Tsar must have had news. Is it well or ill?"

His question was destined to be speedily answered.

The crowd also seeing the orderly, who was evidently seeking to evade notice, suddenly turned upon him with a shout.

"He bears dispatches!" shouted someone, and in a second he was dragged off his horse, and held violently struggling on the ground.

A dozen hands searched him—nor vainly. A sealed packet snatched from his tunic, was held triumphantly aloft amid screams of exultation.

"Read it aloud," came the shout. "Mount the pedestal. Let us hear what he is doing to destroy us."

In obedience, the fortunate citizen thus raised to distinction got upon the base of the Miniv Monument, and tore open the dispatch. As he read it, the joy that illumined his face betrayed the character of the news.

A sealed packet . . . . . was held triumphantly aloft.

"Friends," he shouted, "Russia once more is free. St. Petersburg has fallen. This morning she is in the hands of the Nihilists. The flag of the Republic waves from the Winter Palace. The reign of the Romanoffs is over."

He would have proceeded, but his voice was drowned in the vociferous shouting that beat through the Red Square like the thunder of the waves upon the sea. There was no restraint now. St. Petersburg was calling upon Moscow, and Moscow would not be found wanting.

Riot ran wanton through the streets. With the rough reason that animates a multitude when success welds its strange fragments into the semblance of unity, it split itself into several divisions and made for the different gates of the city, fearful that an attempt to escape might be made by the Royal party. A rush was made to the entrance of the Kremlin, but the huge fortress palace defied such amateur bombardment, and Pochowski only smiled grimly when he saw the dissipation of energy which, after all, might but prove the Tsar's salvation.

His own little troop of soldiers he dispatched to take observations, and keep him informed of what went on whilst he dashed off past the Church of St. Basil in the direction of the Red Gate.

As he swept round the great cathedral, a young officer met him and saluted.

"Ah, Prenskovitch," he exclaimed, "You bring news."

"Yes," answered the lieutenant. "You have heard that St. Petersburg is in our hands?"

"What else?" asked Pochowski anxiously.

"The British and United States fleets are in the Neva. The forts are already being bombarded."

Pochowski paused, clearly troubled by the intelligence.

"There will be no landing for the present, I suppose?" he asked.

"I think not," was the reply. "The forts are holding out and are well garrisoned. News has also come that the British are engaging us to-day at Kharkof. It is mere rumour, but I fancy that it is true. Perchance the battle is now over."

"If so," said Pochowski reflectively, "the fate of Russia will be decided. There will not be a second battle. Meanwhile, what of the Tsar. I presume you learnt this within?"

"Yes, captain," replied Prenskovitch. "The Kremlin is put in readiness for a siege. The Tsar and his family are in council in St. George's Hall. His advisers are with him, and also the Generals who have remained on his staff."

"The Romanoffs are at their last council!" said Pochowski bitterly. "Do you know to what conclusion they have come?"

"The Tsar awaits the issue of the day at Kharkof," replied Prenskovitch. "He intends to collect an army to invest St. Petersburg. For the present he will wait events in the south."

Pochowski smiled grimly and pointed to the cathedral. From one of its minarets waved a flag of quite new design. It was the white and red banner of the revolution.

"It is well he waits," he said. "The empire is already departed. Let us salute the youngest of republics!" And the stern agitator, with real emotion, raised his sword in military fashion in salutation of the fluttering silk.

Dismissing Prenskovitch, Pochowski rode on to the Red Gate. On his way he saw signs of the energy and determination of the people of Moscow. The whole town was in their possession. Here and there a small knot of soldiers had endeavoured to make a stand, but they had been ruthlessly cut down by the infuriated mob. From most of the public buildings flew the flag of the revolution, in all kinds of material, shape, and tint, as eager hands had contrived it. Evening had approached, and the city had become calm, for there was no longer any resistance to this new and terrible power that stirred fiercely within the breast of the great Russian people.

Yes, Russia was at last free.

Pochowski, as he rode along, felt his heart glow with the consciousness of the great, the noble, task he had that day completed.

His country had wrested itself from the tyrant's grasp with scarce an effort; nay, more than this, the path of the revolution was almost unstained by blood.

These dark, cruel forces he feared so much, the fierce spirits whose cunning brutality had made his cause so hated by those who did not understand it, had made no definite movement. The Tsar was safe in his royal palace—in honourable durance—and the republic would burst upon the world in all the glory of unsullied innocence.

Pochowski might well rejoice, for his life's mission was consummated. He was close to the Red Gate when his eye fell upon the figure of a man creeping cautiously along in the shadows, as if anxious to escape observation. Something in his appearance and manner caused Pochowski's heart to throb with a strange sensation of terror and foreboding, for he recognised in him one of the daring leaders of that most desperate band, the Nihilists of Moscow, whose sleepless hatred of authority had invented a thousand deeds of outrage to sully almost beyond redemption the cause of liberty in Russia.

He . . . . . gripped him by the throat.

Springing from his charger he rushed upon his dread associate, gripped him by the throat and pinned him with his back against the wall.

"There is some devilry afoot," he cried. "Why are you here? Tell me the truth or I will stretch you lifeless where you stand."

The eyes of the stranger cowered before his stern gaze. "There is nothing. Believe me," he stammered.

"Liar!" shouted Powchowski, tearing a document from an inner pocket of the man's coat.

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Scorning the shrinking form beside him, he hastily opened the paper and read its contents by the fading light. He started violently, and great beads of perspiration stood upon his brow.

"Merciful Heaven!" he exclaimed, "shall I be in time?" An instant later his horse struck fire from the hard road as he was urged into a headlong gallop.

Dashing through the streets, careless of the straggling groups gathered here and there in animated discussion, with eyes firm set upon the noble outline of that splendid palace of the Tsar which fretted itself in graceful silhouette against the deepening azure of the sky, Pochowski, with a desperate rage in his heart, sped towards the stately gateway which dominates the outer gardens of the Kremlin.

But before he had reached it there came to his ears a dull muttering as of distant thunder, which instantaneously broadened out into a savage crash.

And then, as he gazed horror-stricken, he saw the graceful pinnacle which surmounts the chapel of St. George lurch outwards and fall in reverberating ruin.

This proud triumph of a great architect was now a shapeless mass of *débris*.

Realising too well the unutterable catastrophe that had occurred, he reeled in the saddle with anguish, and grew faint and sick at heart.

"The fiendish deed is done, then," he groaned. "Russia's grim destiny is too stong for us. Freedom has come, but she has extorted a terrible price!"

At this moment a man darted towards him from the dark shadow of the arch, with eyes aglow in the demoniac gleam of fanatical exultation.

"It is done," he yelled triumphantly, recognising his leader, "the Romanoffs are no more."

"Villain," exclaimed Pochowski, now rendered half mad with impotent fury; "you have slain our cause and you shall perish with it."

Drawing his sword he hacked at the murderer like a maniac, and not satisfied with the first two terrible blows, he leapt to the ground and did not desist until he had mangled the body beyond recognition.

And thus was Russia re-born.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A Sortie from Paris.

Adhering inflexibly to his plan of operations throughout the campaign, Lord Roberts marched on Paris by both banks of the Seine. The northern advanced by way of Meulan and Triel to Herblay, and the southern concentrated at Poissy.

Sorely were the French tempted to break through their self-imposed restraint and attack him in detail, when the great bend of the Seine—where it sweeps round the heights of St. Achères—imposed a formidable obstacle to complete unity of action between the two forces.

In view of the history of subsequent events, they would undoubtedly have been well advised in risking much upon a series of determined battles in this locality. They must have inflicted great damage upon the invaders and caused considerable delay, even were they unsuccessful in the main issue. Besides, they had always the formidable *teinture* of fortifications to fall back upon.

But the heart of France was not in this war. Her soldiers were listless and dispirited, her generals fearful of disastrous consequence.

So the counsels of prudence prevailed, and beyond the constitution of comparatively feeble corps of observation, nothing was done to check the British at the one great point in the advance on Paris, where they laid themselves absolutely open to strong assault, without the possibility of either section of the army helping the other.

The result was seen when too late.

When the staid Journal des Debats informed the Government that "forts were all very well, but fighting was better," Lord Roberts was in possession of St. Germain and Argenteuil, with his gigantic force spread over the intervening ten miles of the Seine valley where it bends due south towards Versailles.

At once there was a fierce outbreak of public opinion in Paris. The dancing behind the fortifications so graphically depicted by the Gil Blas was suspended whilst the merry makers prepared a surprise visit to the Lycée, and the outcome of a savage determination on the part of the authorities to preserve order at all costs, was seen in the shooting of many innocent victims in the streets, and the execution of several too emphatic patriots.

Something, however, had to be done to allay popular feeling. M. Hanotaux was equal to the occasion.

He issued a flowing manifesto in which he wept in printers' ink over the necessity, paramount as it was in the opinion of military experts, that kept the regular troops inactive behind the vast line of defences. At all costs these must be held inviolate and impregnable.

"But," he went on, "Frenchmen, citizens of Paris, it shall not be said that the Government restrained you when panting in your rage, you seek to annihilate the enemy at your gates. It has been decided to form two special sortie columns for immediate service at the front. Citizens desiring to hurl themselves upon the British will give in their names at bureaux constituted in the different quarters, and preparations will be made for an immediate assault on the hostile lines."

There was a perceptible cooling of collective ardour when this official notification was read and digested.

Fewer speeches were made in the cafés, fewer taunts levelled at the Government in the press. Henri Rochefort, in the Intransigeant, boldly denounced the scheme. He headed the article: "Another Way of Killing Communards," and explained whether they were shot in batches by French soldiers at Père Lachaise, or shot in hundreds by the callous British, the end and aim of the authorities was the same—to get rid of the disaffected.

M. Hanotaux smiled as he read, but went on with the arrangements nevertheless, and civilly offered M. Rochefort the colonelcy of one of the newly raised regiments.

The editor . . . . . lit a cigarette with the Minister's letter.

And the editor of L'Intransigeant smiled in his turn, lit a cigarette with the Minister's letter, and wrote another article, saying that the fantastic project might, perhaps, result in teaching the authorities some valuable lessons in strategy.

But the more ardent spirits among the populace were not to be repressed. No less than 50,000 names were enrolled for this special service.

They were hastily mobilised, marched outside Paris, and there armed, whilst the supreme command was given to a crackbrained general, whose loud-spoken condemnation of the Council of War had already nearly led to his imprisonment.

To launch these crazy and ill-formed thunderbolts of tin against the victorious troops of England was a mad notion in itself, were it not in strict pursuance of the policy discovered by M. Hanotaux and Rochefort.

But de Bossy, the leader, saw nothing outrageous or ludicrous in the scheme. He was fully persuaded that his cohort of enthusiasts, directed by his genius, was capable of clearing a path through the strong British lines, and he no sooner got within striking distance than he hurried forward to the attack.

This was delivered at a peculiar hour, four o'clock in the

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afternoon, and was heralded by an unexpected artillery movement by the French, who galloped up to close quarters and shelled the British centre, held by Massy's division, as it happened, before their opponents quite realised what was occurring.

Under cover of the momentary confusion thus created, de Bossy brought on his two army corps, divided into ten brigades of five thousand men each, and without paying the slightest regard to reserves or supports, attacked with his whole force along a front extending nearly a mile.

A few minutes after they were first discovered, the leading brigades were close to Massy's outposts; within half-an-hour de Bossy's followers had by sheer weight and uncontrolled audacity forced their way like a gigantic wedge right into the centre of the British position.

Four regiments were cut into ribands in the vain attempt to dam this outrageous torrent of madmen.

Guns were thundered to the front and discharged shrapnel and grape point blank at the assailants, but they scarce had time to limber up and retreat before the ground they had taken was overrun by the now frenzied French.

De Bossy, who seemed to lead a charmed life, rode at the head of the right attack and cheered on his men with a courage and buoyancy of spirit that rendered him almost inspired.

For a little while matters looked very serious indeed.

French staff officers, who watched the progress of events from the neighbouring heights, sent off urgent messages for more guns and prompt assistance by trained troops, and by five o'clock there was every indication of a great struggle commencing, which might last all through the night.

But a check now occurred.

Lord Roberts, who had been taking a rest after an exceptionally busy day, when the heavy firing at the front warned him of some unusual development, hastily summoned his staff and rode forward to get definite information.

This no one could give him. But from the summit of a hill he was able to note the method and manner of the assault, and he quickly made up his mind as to the course to be pursued.

"Tell General Massy," he said to an aide-de-camp, "to attack with every available man, and use the bayonet at the earliest possible moment."

Two others he despatched to Generals Alleyne and Nairn, the one to hurry up his division on the left, and the other to fight every available gun under any conditions.

Turning to Harington, he continued: "You go to Sir Drury Lowe and ask him to charge with 10,000 cavalry on the enemy's left flank within half-an-hour. That is the line of country to be followed by the division," pointing with his sword to an open stretch of meadow land that ran from the British lines and bent towards the French columns. "You had better accompany Sir Drury Lowe and show him the proper direction."

Harington rode two miles in eight minutes, which is good going across country, and found Sir Drury Lowe already busy marshalling his array in anticipation of hasty orders.

There were about 8,000 sabres on parade, but the gallant cavalry commander decided to lose no time in trying what these could effect as a preliminary. Giving instructions for a reserve brigade to be constituted, and brought to his assistance, he set off at a sharp canter, and five minutes before the time allotted by the Commander-in-Chief the British horses were sweeping in splendid style along the level belt of grass selected for their passage.

By this time the tumultuous mob of the enemy had been effectually halted.

The 42nd Highlanders, the Yorkshire Regiment, the Lincolns, the Durham Light Infantry, the 1st and 4th battalions of the 60th, the 3rd battalion of the Rifle Brigade, and many other gallant corps, had flung themselves upon the advancing French, and were now holding them back with the bayonet as a strong swimmer buffets his way against a stream.

Slowly but surely they forged through the struggling mass, whilst the screams of the unfortunate victims who vainly sought to escape, mingled with the exultant yells of their comrades in the rear who pressed on to death in their turn.

The Colonel of the 42nd, mounted upon a magnificent grey horse, encountered de Bossy and struck at him with his claymore in such hearty earnest, that the blow broke the Frenchman's sword raised for the parry.

The noble horse leapt right into the midst of the press.

De Bossy lurched from his charger on the offside and was received on the point of a bayonet, whilst a gruff Argyllshire voice roared at him:

"Ye drivellin' cediot, could ye no fa' like a mon and not like a bag o'meal?"

Which was De Bossy's requiem.

When Sir Drury Lowe's division was within striking distance, he did not hesitate a second in divining the true conditions under which to make his cavalry most effective against the disorderly rabble in front.

"Echelon formation," and "fresh points of attack," were the instructions quickly transmitted to commanding officers and squadron leaders. Then the series of charges commenced.

Liberally interpreting Lord Robert's orders, Harington accompanied Sir Drury Lowe in the first rush, at the head of the 17th Lancers.

Practically no attempt was made by the French to beat off the terrible engine of destruction now levelled at them. Lances were slung and swords drawn as being far more deadly under the circumstances, and forthwith the British horsemen began their awful work as though they were cutting down brushwood. Yet, after the first flinching of the human undergrowth through which they hewed their way, the task became a strenuous one. Desperate, maddened with the final rage against unavoidable death that renders the tiger so fearsome, the Frenchman, unable to retreat or go forward, sought to sell their lives dearly.

Harington's charger had his flank ripped open with a bayonet thrust. Frenzied with pain, the noble horse leapt right into the midst of the press, lashed out furiously to clear a way for himself, and then bounded into a fresh group. This time he stumbled, and blundered to his knees, throwing Harington forward on his neck. Whilst striving to recover his seat Teddy felt a heavy crack on his head, the light left his eyes, the sound of conflict died away into nothingness, and he fell from the saddle as one dead.

He had been struck by a clubbed rifle, and would infallibly have been stabbed by his infurated assailants did not his charger again strike vigorously on all sides with his iron-shod feet.

A rush of Lancers now cleared the locality, and the horse finished the charge with them, receiving no further injuries and trotting back to his quarters when the business was over.

The end came quickly once the constituent elements of the sortie became convinced that death and not glory lay in front.

(To be continued.)

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

T. R.—Butter made from the thin milk of the native cow in India is bluish in colour. To those who have been accustomed to the golden tint of fresh butter it is decidedly strange to see the bread apparently painted blue, and it is with reluctance that they touch it; but it's very good stuff, after all.

S. P.—In this country, during the reign of Charles I., spurs were commonly worn as part of the male attire, whether the wearer was accustomed to ride or not.

R.—Your canary probably came from Germany. The exportation of canaries from that country is estimated at more than 100,000 yearly; of these by far the greater portion go to the United States, some come here, and some are sent to Russia.

A CORRESPONDENT who has just returned from China after a stay of four years sends me a letter in which he writes in the following manner concerning railway accommodation: "The carriages are fitted up in the simplest possible manner; no cushions or cloth or mattings are used, owing to the uncleanliness of the natives. Metal parts are used as sparingly as possible, because the native finds it difficult to resist the temptation of cutting them off and stealing them. Chinamen take an awful lot of luggage, and are quite content to travel in an open goods-truck. Fares are very low, and I have known a man to charter a whole train of such trucks for his not very numerous family and his immense quantity of luggage. On the mail trains there are carriages fitted with more comfort for the convenience of more civilised people."

M. L. asks: "Can you tell me where the quotation 'Men are but children of a larger growth' appeared."——In Dryden's "All for love."

W. R. D. asks: "What difference is there between a minute gun and any other gun?"——A minute gun is so called because a minute elapses between each discharge. It is generally a signal of distress at sea, or a gun fired at the death of a distinguished individual.

HYGIENIC.—There is said to be only one make of shoe in the world which countenances five toes on the human foot, and that is the wooden shoe of Belgium.

F. G. H.—I should say the most expensive sporting events in the world are international yacht races. Some years ago, five days of yachting between the *Vigilant* and *Valkyrie*, including the cost of three other vessels who were built to defend the Cup, but were not selected, probably cost the Americans £111,000.

S. D. G. writes: "Is there any reason attributed to the saying that if one's ears burn someone is talking about you?"——This conceit is ascribed to the superstition of guardian angels, who are supposed to touch the right ear if the talk is favourable, and the left if otherwise. This is in order to cheer or warn, as the occasion necessitates.

C. H.—Any dance in which the partners stand up and face one another may be called a country dance.

B. Y.—To "knock the spots off anything" is an allusion to the traditional skill of Western cowboys and famous rifle shots, who would shoot the spots out of a card held between the fingers of a friend.

IMP.—The word "imp" formerly meant "child." Shakespeare speaks of the imps in the Tower, thereby meaning children, and in one of his sermons Jeremy Tayler refers to "the imps that sang Hosannas to Jesus in the Temple."

M.—A cigar is served to the Italian soldier as part of his daily ration.

H. B.—The Belgian peasant goes in largely for the rearing of cock fowls, which he trains to crow very frequently. Cock-crowing competitions take place at intervals, and the peasant whose bird excels in this performance has attained the height of his ambition. The birds are placed in cages set in a row, for the purpose of stirring the spirit of emulation within them; near each bird is a marker, whose duty it is to mark down each crow made by the bird. The cock that scores the highest number wins the prize and becomes the joy of its master's heart.

Y.—The most interesting, if not the oldest, pawnticket in existence was that discovered at Florence some two years ago. It was found in an old portfolio of drawings, and bears the signatures of Tasso, the great poet. On this ticket he acknowledges the receipt of 25 lire (£1), for which the lender held as security his father's sword, four sheets, and two tablecovers. It is dated March 2nd, 1570. Tasso, like Milton, did not make a fortune by his poetry.

D.—At the battle of Trafalgar the heaviest gun used threw a projectile weighing 32lb.; our modern 110-ton gun throws a shot that weighs 2,000lb.

L. O.—The porters of Smyrna are exceedingly strong; they carry with comparative ease a load of 200lb. Their diet is chiefly fruit and olives. Olives, by-the-way, are very sustaining.

ETHEL M.—Generally speaking, examinations for lady clerkships in the G.P.O. are held every six months. Candidates must be of not less than eighteen and not more than twenty years of age.

W. P. writes to ask if the transmission of messages through telegraph wires injures birds that may be perched upon them.——Certainly not.

ALICE W.—The first woman to obtain the degree of M.D. was Elizabeth Blackwell, of the United States, in 1849.

S. P. G. writes to ask if the common idea that a seafaring life tends to prevent growth is a true one?——Although this was no doubt the case in the days of small ships, cramped accommodation, bad food and water, and, practically, unventilated living apartments, it is doubtful whether it is true of the present day. There is, however, one reason which would largely account for stunting of growth in those who have been sailors from early youth. This is the fact that from the time he leaves port the sailor can never sleep more than four hours at a time. Now sleep is very important to growth, and no doubt this has some effect. At the same time, it is quite possible that the constant exercise and the constant breathing of the pure sea air may largely counteract it.

C.—The tea-cigarette that was placed upon the market some time ago was not a success. It was made of the unbroken leaf of green tea, slightly moistened. The effect on the practised smoker was bad, but on the tyro it was indescribable. Strangely enough, the cure for the sickness was a cup of tea.

A. H.—The longest tunnel in England is the Severn Tunnel, on the Great Western Railway; it measures 7,664 yards.

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A Magnificent Complexion

Is assured in a short time by using LILLIE POWDER, which, owing to its medicinal qualities, is absolutely the finest preparation for the skin obtainable. Invented by Mrs. Langtry.

Unrivalled for all affections of the skin. Should be used by all men after shaving; and by all ladies. No toilet table is complete without it. Send for it at once; and if there is any difficulty about it come straight to us.

These are Proofs Indeed.

MOST EXQUISITE: "I think your new Lillie Powder most exquisite."
ADELINA PATTI.

THE VERY BEST: "I think your new Lillie Powder is quite the very best, and you may be pleased to know I have used it ever since I first went on the stage!"—ELLALINE TERRISS.

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PREPARED AND EXQUISITELY SCENTED UNDER THE STRICT SUPERVISION OF HER MAJESTY'S PERRUQUIER, Mr. W. CLARKSON.

THREE TINTS—BLANCHE, NATURELLE, & RACHEL.

To be had of all the best Chemists and Hairdressers.

PRICE ONE SHILLING. BY POST, 1s. 2d.

THE LILLIE SYNDICATE, 3 Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C.

A NATIONAL TOAST LIST

The Proprietor of Beecham's Pills, knowing well that a number of people when called on for "A TOAST" at the festive gatherings of the season will feel suddenly at a loss for something to say, ventures to offer the following suggestions, with the comforting conviction that they "fill a long-felt want":

Health to our Queen! Prosperity to her people! and good luck to **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

The Prince of Wales, the Royal Family, and every other Family that takes **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

May every true Briton enjoy comfort and content, and have plenty of **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Bonny Scotland; may her brawny sons, the descendants of heroes, never lack **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Erin, the Emerald Jewel of the Sea, but never green enough to do without **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Here's to our Soldiers, and the tiny sentinels that keep watch over their health, **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Our Navy; may it ever sail on a sea of glory, and be fortified by a stock of **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Health to every member of the Freemason's Craft; may they never tile the door against **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

May old England's sons abroad never forget their Mother Country and **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Health to the Ladies who wear British Fabrics, and take **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

The Englishman's Castle, his home, and may it always contain a box of **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Success to the Inventions of Our Country, including that valuable remedy **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

What every Briton loves: his Native Land, his Liberty, and his box of **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Health to the four B's: Beauties, Benedicts, Bachelors, and **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Life's four comforts: a Good Wife, a Full Purse, a True Friend, and a box of **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Amidst the World's Changes may we never be tempted to swerve from **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

May the population of the world continue to be remarkable for their faith in **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Absent Friends; may all Christmas Hampers include a box of **BEECHAM'S PILLS**

Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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